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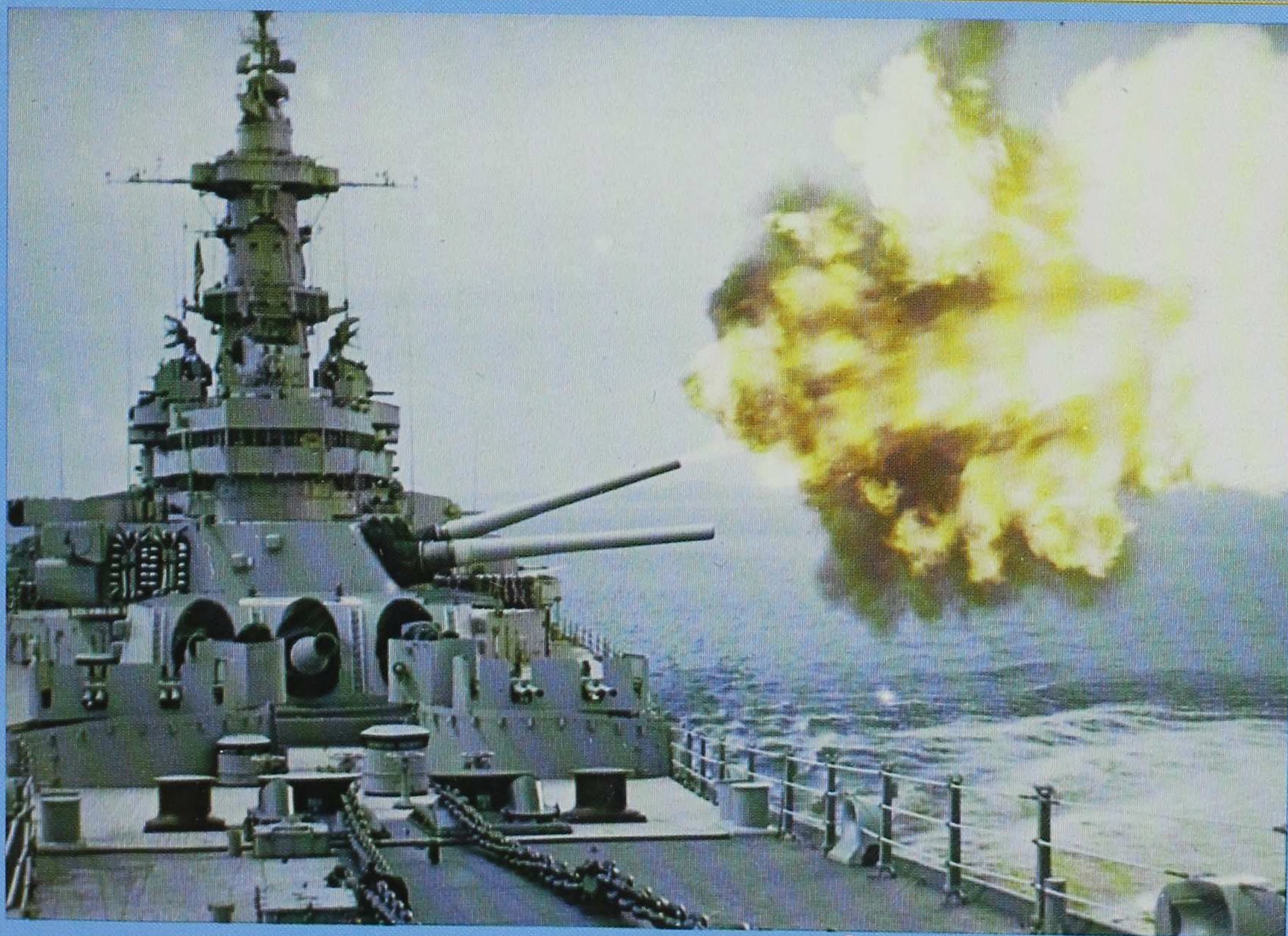
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The PALIMPSEST

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 64 NUMBER 3

MARCH/APRIL 1983





Iowa State Historical Department
Office of the State Historical Society
The Palimpsest

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Adrian D. Anderson, Executive Director

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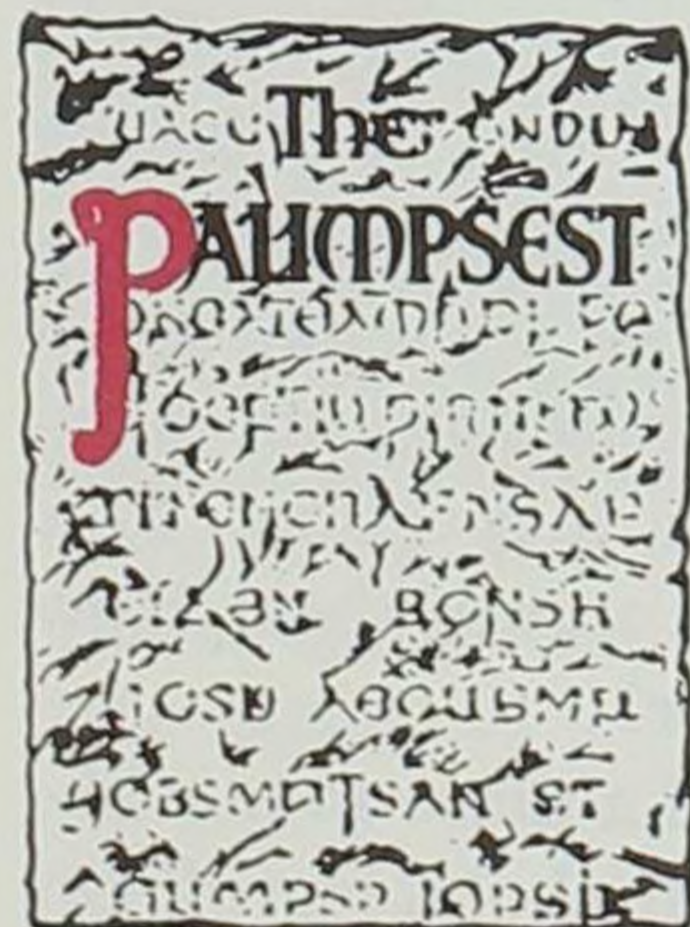
MARCH/APRIL 1983

Mary K. Fredericksen, Editor

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Cover: The USS Iowa. (Official U.S. Navy photograph)



The Meaning of the Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete, and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

A Congressional Wife in Wartime Washington

by Dorris B. Martin

The 1938 election was over! The months of campaigning spun around in my head. It was all a blur: chicken dinners in country churches, Tom's speeches, putting names and faces together. But we had won.

Our children, Dick and Brownlee, would be uprooted from high school to go to Washington and call a hotel home. Had we forgotten anything? There were new calling cards—Tom's with "Member of Congress, First District of Iowa." There was the family picture for the newspapers. A vision came to my mind of all the other newly-elected members of Congress and their families from all over the United States wending their ways on icy roads that December to our nation's capital, starry-eyed and perhaps lonely. Would we always be transients? Could Washington, D.C., be home? No, that would be political suicide.

On our way, in our new car, we mixed weariness with jubilation and then with annoyance when Brownlee told us she had never been inside Iowa's beautiful Old Capitol with its hanging staircase. It stood right in the center of the campus in our town. In disgust Tom said, "Shall we go back and show it to her?"

The roads in 1939 were not as fine as they are now. It was quite a trek from Iowa across the mountains. We tried to lighten our spirits with jokes, some of which we still remember. In

Washington, Pennsylvania, we pretended we had arrived and were looking for the Capitol. As we passed through states, we tried to name their senators and we exhausted all the travel games we knew.

At last! At last! Washington, D.C.!

Then the unexpected happened. Looking in all directions to take in the sights, we drove down Pennsylvania Avenue. Then the car hiccuped and came to a stop; we were out of gas right in front of the White House! Our consternation, as we realized where we were, was heightened by the armed guards who promptly popped out of the gatehouse. This was no trifling matter. The driveway must not be blocked. "Your identification, please!" Did we look like suspicious characters, we wondered? Proof of innocence seemed to be needed. Dick and Brownlee maintained absolute quiet for once. Tom refrained from disgracing his new identity as a member of Congress and merely showed his driver's license. He was directed to take a taxi to the nearest gas station, and we waited, mortified, for his return.

Anxious to get settled in Washington, we made the rounds of addresses we had been given. Several hotels had written us they were saving apartments for our inspection. This made it quite easy in those prewar days. How utterly different it was later!

Before evening we found a place to our liking; a furnished apartment in a hotel just off Du



Senator and Mrs. Martin in the Capitol with the statue of Iowa Senator James Harlan. (courtesy the author)

Pont Circle seemed to have everything—a roof garden and an attractive dining room. Its location in the first taxi zone meant one could ride over the main part of Washington for twenty cents; two people could ride for thirty cents.

This was an exceptionally busy time for Tom. Settling into his new office and engaging secretaries to assist the man he had brought from home would have more than filled his days, but immediately the House sessions began. Before long he was named to the important and very active Military Affairs Committee, apparently because he held a commission in the Regular Army.

I had to struggle with my own lesser problems, but I soon found the place I needed for information and genuine friendship: the Women's Congressional Club. The membership of the club, which had been incorporated by an act of Congress in 1908, was composed of the wives and daughters of members of Congress, the Cabinet, and the Supreme Court.

At the Congressional Club we wives of new members heard the appalling demands to be made on us. With the help of the old-timers, we started on the superhuman task of calling on every wife in government circles whose husband outranked the new member!

This unique situation, where one who hardly had set foot in town was expected to make the initial call, was further complicated by the need to make each call on a given day. In 1939 to make a call on the wrong day was failing to heed official position. When we got to an outlying apartment house, we naturally wished we might complete our calls there. We could only say to ourselves,

Monday—Supreme Court Day
Tuesday—House Members' Day
Wednesday—Cabinet Day
Thursday—Senate Day
Friday—Diplomatic Day.

However, since one was rarely received, we

"beat the game" by leaving friends' cards along with our own. When the door was opened by a maid or manservant and we heard the familiar, "Madam is not receiving today," we flicked over the corner of our cards (and of our friends), which indicated the call had been made in person, not by a chauffeur with the cards.

A very funny situation arose when we neophytes were out in rented chauffeur-driven cars paying homage to our superiors and return calls began to come to us! On Tuesday, our day "At Home," we would have loved to stay at home and receive callers, but we had to wade through the list of House members due to be called on.

Our only consolation was fingering and cherishing the lovely, crested cards, "Ambassador Extraordinary, Minister Plenipotentiary," which were delivered in our absence. We also comforted ourselves that never again would all this be expected of us.

The story of Congress passing the act incorporating the Women's Congressional Club has been retold many times at Founders' Day banquets.

The wives of the congressmen had persuaded nearly all of their husbands of the need for such a club, but one member of Congress disagreed vehemently. He insisted the women would make only trouble because of their differences in politics and that they could never manage their finances!

The wife of this member decided to take her dissenting husband in tow and remove him from the House floor at the critical time. As the story goes, she phoned him and in her sweetest voice asked him to take her to lunch in the House restaurant. Neither the House nor the Senate takes time out for lunch; the members leave individually as they see fit and go to one of the restaurants in the Capitol.

The plans were all laid. As soon as the dissenter left the floor, the bill was brought up and a charter was granted the Women's Congress-

sional Club by a unanimous vote!

The clubhouse was built in 1912 on land given by a senator's widow, Mrs. Henderson of Missouri. She realized the need for a club that would bring together the women from all the states who shared an entirely new life. To the gift of the land she added \$25,000 for the construction of the clubhouse. Her generosity was nearly matched by her idiosyncracies; she never ate meat nor drank alcoholic beverages. Along with her gifts she stipulated that alcohol never should be served in the clubhouse. This stipulation was actually followed until 1962. In a pageant the club put on one year, little Mrs. Henderson was represented as a ghost hovering over the club and munching a carrot!

The club was self-supporting from dues and various fund-raising projects, the principal one being the sale of cookbooks. During World War II, when printing was nearly impossible, the club published a book with recipes handwritten and signed by the donors. This cleared \$14,000 in profits during its first two years and more later.

The club was located on the corner of New Hampshire Avenue and Sixteenth Street, a few blocks north of the White House. It was built of white stone and stucco in a neo-classic style, with a balcony over the entrance, a circular drive in front quite typical of Washington, and small but beautifully manicured grounds, maintained by the National Botanical Gardens.

The club created opportunities for new members and old to share experiences that were sometimes puzzling, often thrilling, but always the very warp and woof of our existence. It took a bit of doing for all of us, grounded as we were in partisanship, to lay aside politics when we entered our clubhouse, but this was absolutely essential if the club's reputation for gracious hospitality was to be maintained. When we returned to Washington after hectic campaigning in our various states and chatted again with our good friends "from across the aisle," as our husbands always put it, real re-

straint was needed to refrain from comments about the hot campaign. This, no doubt, was good for our souls and was what made the club possible. Very rarely was there an explosion of feeling.

Of course, entertaining the first lady was the most important occasion of the year. At a luncheon for members only, Mrs. Roosevelt arrived with her familiar handbag, which resembled a suitcase. Some of us pondered how she would manage it at the table. One intrepid soul, who lived to regret her suggestion, asked Mrs. Roosevelt if she would care to leave it in the office. Mrs. Roosevelt promptly agreed. Then the awesome responsibility she had as-

sumed dawned on the clubmember! Who could know what valuable documents might be stored in that case! There was no drawer that locked which was large enough to hold it. That sad member sat out the party in the office with Mrs. Roosevelt's case on her knees while the rest of us enjoyed the luncheon. At the end of the year when the outgoing board entertained the new board and offered advice with the food, this particular member suggested that, at the next year's party, they let Mrs. Roosevelt "Swing her own luggage—er, handbag!"

We were brought close together in the club by many classes in public speaking, foreign languages, flower arrangement, health and ex-



Senator Martin greeting Mrs. F.E. Fields of Boone, Iowa, in his Washington, D.C., office in March 1958. From left to right: Mrs. Dorris B. Martin, Mrs. Fields, Senator Martin and Mrs. Amy Bradley of Manchester, Iowa, a member of the Senator's staff. (courtesy the author)

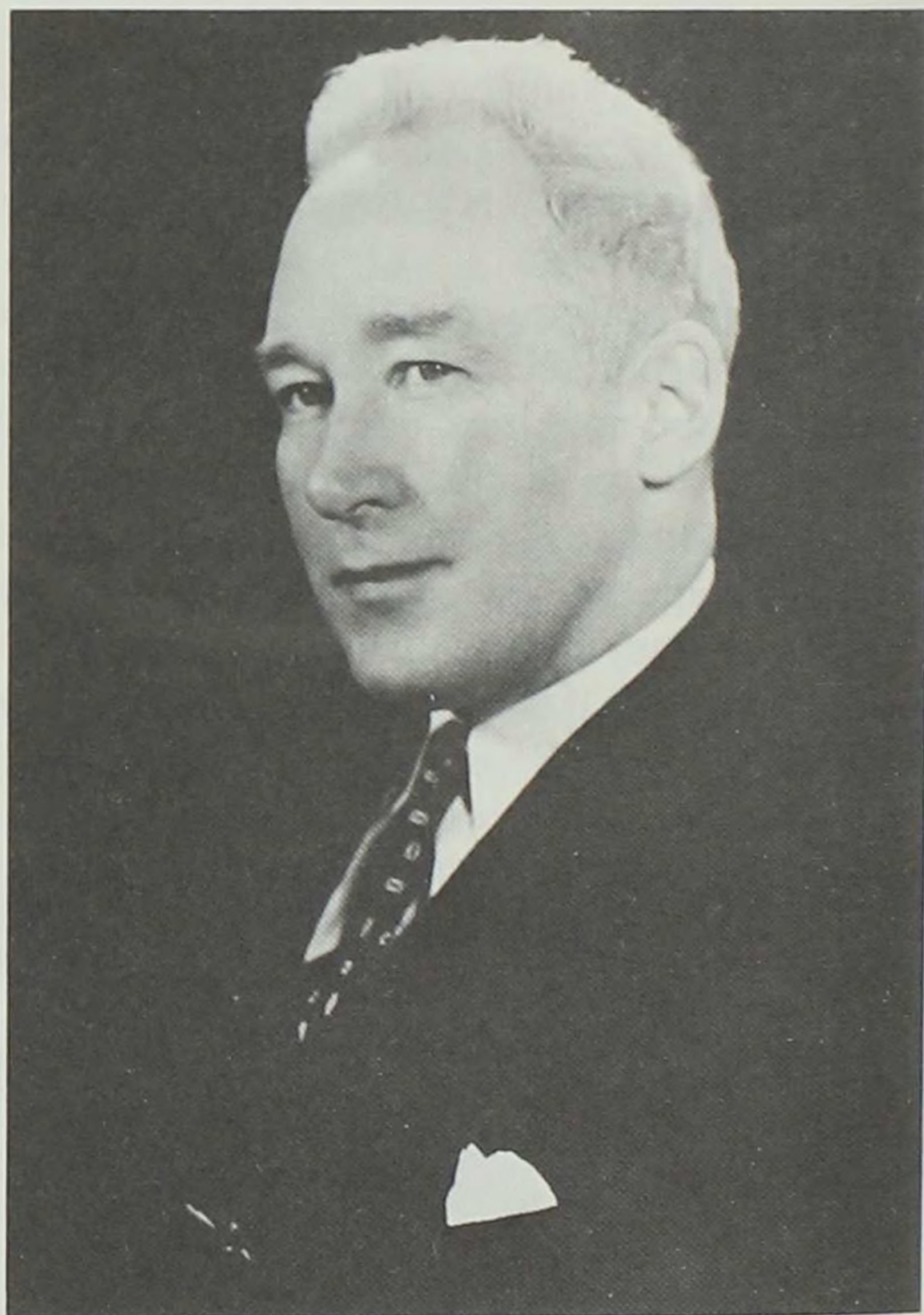
ercise, and even hat making. There were also hobby shows and art shows and congressional trips to New York City and Panama.

The club was the fountain of important information, such as "coffee outranks tea," which must never be forgotten in asking official wives to pour! We learned that guests, even in large numbers, must be seated exactly according to their official rank; when two or more had the same rank, the time of their state's entrance into the Union decided their placement. We laughed, but we never dreamed of defying this rule. We always found it hilarious applying rules of precedence to getting in and out of elevators, but somehow we didn't quite ignore them.

Each time we returned home I tried to answer the oft-repeated questions about social life in Washington. I felt an urge to show our Iowans Washington as it really was. I wanted to tell them how congressional people, pressed by world affairs and struggling with domestic problems, relieved their tense days with parties of all kinds.

The highly publicized cocktail and buffet parties were frequent enough, but the custom of always offering a variety of fresh fruit juices and soft drinks along with the regular drinks was not well known outside of Washington. These parties incidentally provided an easy way of entertaining constituents, who seemed to float about the capital in a steady stream.

For the diplomatic corps the contacts made at these parties were important to their jobs. Of necessity, they had to keep their wits about them at all times. It was often said these nights were an extension of office hours, redone in dinner jackets. From the mansions of Foxhall Road to the embassies along Massachusetts Avenue, the diplomats wove their way, the circuit covering some two hundred parties a month, one thousand a season. The food at the embassies was native and exotic. The Turks had grape leaves, the Arabs liked lamb, the



Thomas E. Martin (courtesy the author)

French served pastries, and the Koreans pine nut soup.

Such a pace called for restraint in drinking. A tipsy diplomat was not a successful one, and he was not common, so the diplomats carefully planned their consumption. Three cocktail parties and a dinner party nightly were mapped out, with probably nothing the first round, fruit juice on the second, a weak whiskey on the third, wine with dinner, and no after-dinner drinks.

At large parties, where two or more long dinner tables were used, seating plats were made and conspicuously placed in the foyer. A guest could then find his placement without trooping around the tables. When there were a number of long tables, as in the ballroom at the Congressional Club, assistant hostesses, clutching their lists, anxiously searched for the guests who were to be seated at their tables.

The Perle Mesta and Gwen Cafritz parties seemed to have enchanted everyone. I had my doubts, though, as to the legends of serious matters being settled under their glamorous roofs. Perhaps the guests who wandered out to the patio, down through the gardens, and around the swimming pool had some heavy words to exchange, but surely the noise limited any meeting of the minds indoors.

Most senators did not have time for the full treatment that the diplomatic corps gave to the party circuit. The time of adjournment each evening was completely unscheduled, so knowing whether we could make a party or, if we were staying at home, how long to hold dinner was a real problem. In the early evening, all of the telephones to the Capitol were generally in use, so I used to listen closely to the news on the radio to see whether the House and the Senate had folded up. In the days before Pearl Harbor, we dressed for dinner whenever we went out, but of course, such was not the custom for earlier parties. Things often became quite tricky. One could rush home and change between parties, adjust a bit in the car, or just brave it out.

The parties had some features that seemed glamorous to most people—a combo playing, perhaps, under a Picasso on an embassy wall; the distinct thrill of being announced in a loud voice when one entered a drawing room. The butler who was regularly engaged for most of the large, formal parties was much more familiar to us than our host on any given night. It became a matter of status to be recognized by him, instead of receiving the usual, "Your name, madam?"

In many ways prewar Washington was a small town with the atmosphere of a Southern city. It was quite ingrown. It seemed impossible to shake anyone out of a preoccupation with the affairs of government.

The only city in the world at that time to be planned as a nation's capital, Washington had

been laid out with many traffic circles. (When one-way streets took over, surely this was the place for the old joke, "You can't get there from here.") The avenues radiated from the circles for horse-and-buggy travel. The statues were meant to be viewed at a leisurely pace. The mottos over buildings were meant to be guides to the thinking of our great statesmen. The words "Equal Justice under Law" on the Supreme Court Building, for example, and "The Past is Prologue" over the National Archives, stirred even the casual visitor.

At Christmas the holiday customs had a distinctly Southern flavor. The draping of handsome old doorways with long garlands of greenery was new to those of us from the North. Many congressional families made the brief trip to Williamsburg in the festive season for the delightful celebrations in the inns and homes there. There the early English ways took over. Huge napkins were tied around our necks. Suckling pigs were brought out on platters. We were properly introduced to boars' heads and Yorkshire pudding.

In Washington the whole social structure changed with the coming of a new president. Much of the fascination of Washington lay in the game of watching the "Ins" become the "Outs," of seeing an imposing social leader, perhaps a famous hostess, lose status after backing the wrong candidate. It was a naughty game, but it was fun.

In September 1939, Europe went to war. Congress was called back to Washington in a special session which began on 21 September. We had had only six weeks at home and this sudden return threw our family off balance. Dick and Brownlee had just settled back into high school in Iowa City, and so, for the only time in our twenty-two years of congressional service, Tom went back to Washington alone. It was a lonesome period, and for Tom a hectic one.

The Military Affairs Committee had been

taking stock of the nation's defenses and were appalled at what they had found. The combined Army and Air Corps totaled only 170,000 men, with inadequate supplies of weapons and munitions to meet the demands of a possible war. Tooling up for production would require at least eighteen months. The time for delivery of needed strategic and critical materials could not even be estimated. The lack of a two-ocean navy pointed to the critical position of the Panama Canal which was badly in need of air defenses. Tom was to make three trips to Panama and countless other trips to inspect military camps, arsenals, and plants involved in the production of armaments and aircraft.

My duties in this time of preparation for war were also increasing. I tried to take care of our constituents whenever possible. Sometimes committee sessions would be open to the public and I would go and listen for long stretches. I heard witnesses giving testimony about such matters as the establishment of family allowances for men in service. At that time a recruit's pay started at less than twenty dollars a month. The whole question of pay increases for the armed services ultimately came before the Military Affairs Committee. Tom and the other members of that committee put in many long hours before, during, and after every session of Congress.

Those were feverish days. The crowds around the Capitol increased in size. People seemed to sense the impending crisis. Buses from all over the country filled every available parking space. Groups of high school seniors who had toured Gettysburg and other historic spots came to Washington wanting to know what was really happening in our country. Convention groups swarmed over us. At their banquets convention-goers wanted men who could speak on foreign relations or military affairs.

Our family life was disrupted. When Tom returned from his inspection trips, he put in long nights at his office catching up on his work

with the use of a dictaphone. I often joined him on those nights, and I quickly learned how appalled he was at our lack of preparedness and our shortages of war materials.

Because of his concern and his army background, he was named to the Conference Committee to adjust differences between the House and Senate bills that provided for the stockpiling of critical and strategic materials. It was a signal honor for a freshman congressman to serve on a joint conference committee. As a result, Tom came to be known as "the Father of the Stockpile Act."

We kept, however, a semblance of normal life. At the Congressional Club the Friday teas continued. Engraved invitations still went out as we clung to the amenities of life. On entering the club one still noticed the strong scent of kid gloves fresh from the cleaners.

Congress remained in session through the long hot summers of 1940 and 1941. There was the growing budget, the increased revenue requirements, preparedness, and foreign policy to consider. In 1941, with all thinking around the Capitol running in the same worried channels, any news from the Japanese embassy spread quickly through the rumor-ridden town. In the lovely garden behind the embassy, where we had often seen gentlemen in black silk kimonos drinking tea, smoke was once seen curling upward from the outdoor fireplace, suggesting to some Washingtonians the burning of papers in the night.

Then, one shrill voice on the radio and our lives were totally changed. On a bright Sunday afternoon, Tom and I were working in his office. It was a good chance to catch up without interruption. Suddenly the door burst open and Brownlee and her new husband, Ray Reiser, rushed in.

"Daddy! The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor!"

"That can't be!" Tom said.

We rushed for our car radio and then home.

Ten minutes later, as we reached our door, the phone was ringing. The papers in Iowa wanted Tom's reaction. All he could say was, "I'll have to check these reports. I have just heard the news on my car radio."

"Will you vote for war?" they asked.

He could only say, "It is almost unbelievable that Japan would attack us at Pearl Harbor, one of our very strongest points. Nearly our whole fleet is there—the strongest fleet in the world. I must determine that these reports are authentic." We had little sleep that night, listening to all the news reports we could get.

The next morning was one none of us can ever forget. President Roosevelt addressed a joint session of Congress. I arrived early that morning at the Capitol, making my way through the milling crowds. Tight security was in effect; I had to show my special ticket at different points along the way. Reporters and photographers with special permits were on hand.

Reaching the family gallery, I saw other congressional wives but there was no chatting. We were each engrossed in our own heavy thoughts. Looking down from the gallery at the assembling House members, I saw there was none of the usual bantering among them. I looked at their drawn faces. I tried to recall which ones had sons of an age "to go."

The Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn, took his place behind the podium and the gavel fell. The invocation followed. Now "Fishbait" Miller, the doorkeeper, in his formal morning clothes, entered through the main door and stood facing the speaker. On being recognized he intoned, "Mr. Speaker, the Senate of the United States." Vice-President Henry Wallace took his place beside the Speaker of the House and the senators took their allotted places. The doorkeeper then announced the diplomatic corps. Next came the Supreme Court, and last of all the Cabinet. I was too numb to make myself say their names as I usually did.

Now a hush fell over the galleries and the

House chamber. The president's arrival was announced and everyone rose and applauded loudly. Along the specially constructed ramp with enclosed sides and rails on each side a gallant figure moved painstakingly up to the desk immediately in front of the Speaker of the House and the vice-president. The continued applause and cheering seemed to give him strength. For us, listening, his words were not so much heard as felt: "A date that will live in infamy!"

When the president finished speaking, he made his slow exit. The different bodies departed one by one until the House members alone remained. Now came the roll call affirming that a state of war existed. Except for Congresswoman Jeannette Rankin of Montana, the vote was unanimous. Now our country was at war. The last step had been taken. There was no turning back.

We were faced now with the harsh realities of war. Controls went quickly into effect. Troop mobilizations put sharp restrictions on travel. Coupons were issued for the purchase of gas, coal, shoes, meat, and canned goods; with rationing also came price-fixing. Military training programs were expanded and accelerated.

By mid-1942 the civil defense program was training us. We learned the different siren whistles: a so-called "blue" signal was an alert, but a "red" signal required that we seek shelter with absolutely no crack of light showing. The air raid wardens donned their tin helmets and, with their flashlights, checked their areas carefully during the tests.

Our good friend, Congressman Bill Hill, who lived across the street from us in Fairfax Village in southeast Washington, was one of the wardens. One lovely evening I was peacefully stretched out in a chair on our lawn when a "blue" signal sounded. Bill was promptly out with his helmet on his head, but he had gotten his signals mixed. Coming along the street and

seeing me he insisted that I go indoors. I protested and argued that it was only "blue." When I see him to this day, I think of our argument over that alert which he finally won by saying, "You get in or take my tin hat."

When the sirens really gave the red signal, we were in for complete darkness at night. The black drapes we bought were not sufficient to prevent a crack of light from showing through. Once we tried to cut a birthday cake for Dick, who was home on leave, by the light from the opened refrigerator. There was an immediate pounding on our door. We slammed the refrigerator shut on our way to answer the door, but we could not fool the warden.

A little booklet on the use of gasoline prescribed exactly what events justified its use. Driving to get one's book of coupons was permitted, even though it took nearly as much gas to drive across town for it as the coupons allowed. Churchgoing was allowed, but ball games were not. This led to a bit of scheming on the part of the Martins. The ball park was in the same block as our church. That church was well attended before games by us as well as by others. And we put ourselves above suspicion by leaving our church program conspicuously on the front seat of our car after the service. Parties did not rate gas. Taxis became scarce for the first time. There were, of course, buses. I remember Mrs. Taft's demonstration of how she traveled by bus with evening slippers in her bag and a string tied around her waist to hold up her long skirt. The quaint and oddly satisfying custom of social calling came abruptly to an end with Pearl Harbor. Gas rationing made it impossible, and it was never revived to any extent.

At the Congressional Club we heard some bewildering speeches. One that quite upset our sober thoughts was made by a British woman who knew what real air raids were. She was not satisfied with any halfway measures for us. We must each clear a passage to our roof to inspect, frequently, for incendiary bombs. She

also said there should be a bucket of sand, a shovel, and a length of hose on each floor. In my mind I could see our small upstairs hall filled with all that equipment. The sober manner of the speaker, her British accent, and the thought of a cluttered upstairs hall somehow combined to make me feel quite silly. My good friend sitting next to me on the front row was affected in exactly the same way. Trying not to act like foolish schoolgirls, we suppressed our desires to giggle until our sides ached.

I performed better in our first aid class. We bandaged each other as we stretched out on the ballroom floor, put on splints, and marked each other's foreheads with lipstick to tell the exact time when a tourniquet had been put on. Along with our fun, we learned more than a little. I distinguished myself by receiving the highest grade in our final first aid test.

June 6, 1944. At home in Iowa for the primary election, we were awakened early in the morning by a loudspeaker from a sound truck proclaiming, "This is D-Day! The invasion of Normandy has begun!" Up and down the streets of Iowa City the truck sounded its message. The memory strikes a chill over me yet.

In November 1944 President Roosevelt broke all traditions with his election to a fourth term, but everywhere there was speculation about how long he could live. Every conceivable thing was done to conserve his strength while at the same time concealing his illness.

The inaugural in January 1945 was held on the south portico of the White House instead of at the Capitol, as was usually the case. The members of Congress and other guests stood out in the weather with snow all around and witnessed the president's brief, dramatic appearance, wearing his cape and supported by his son, James. After the ceremonies, we had tickets admitting us inside, where we were received by Mrs. Roosevelt and Mrs. Truman. Bess Truman was quite in character as she

stood a step behind Mrs. Roosevelt. I nearly overlooked her. I remember that the refreshments seemed odd for a White House setting: coffee in paper cups and hot dogs.

Mrs. Roosevelt was taking a more important role in every way. She was an ex officio member in cabinet meetings. She and her daughter Anna Eleanor went to the graveside services at Arlington National Cemetery for the funeral of General Watson, who had died on the return trip from the Yalta Conference in February. At the funeral President Roosevelt remained inside his car, which pulled up and stopped exactly beside Tom. From such close range Tom could not fail to notice the president's pallor. He noted that it was clearly apparent where his makeup stopped.

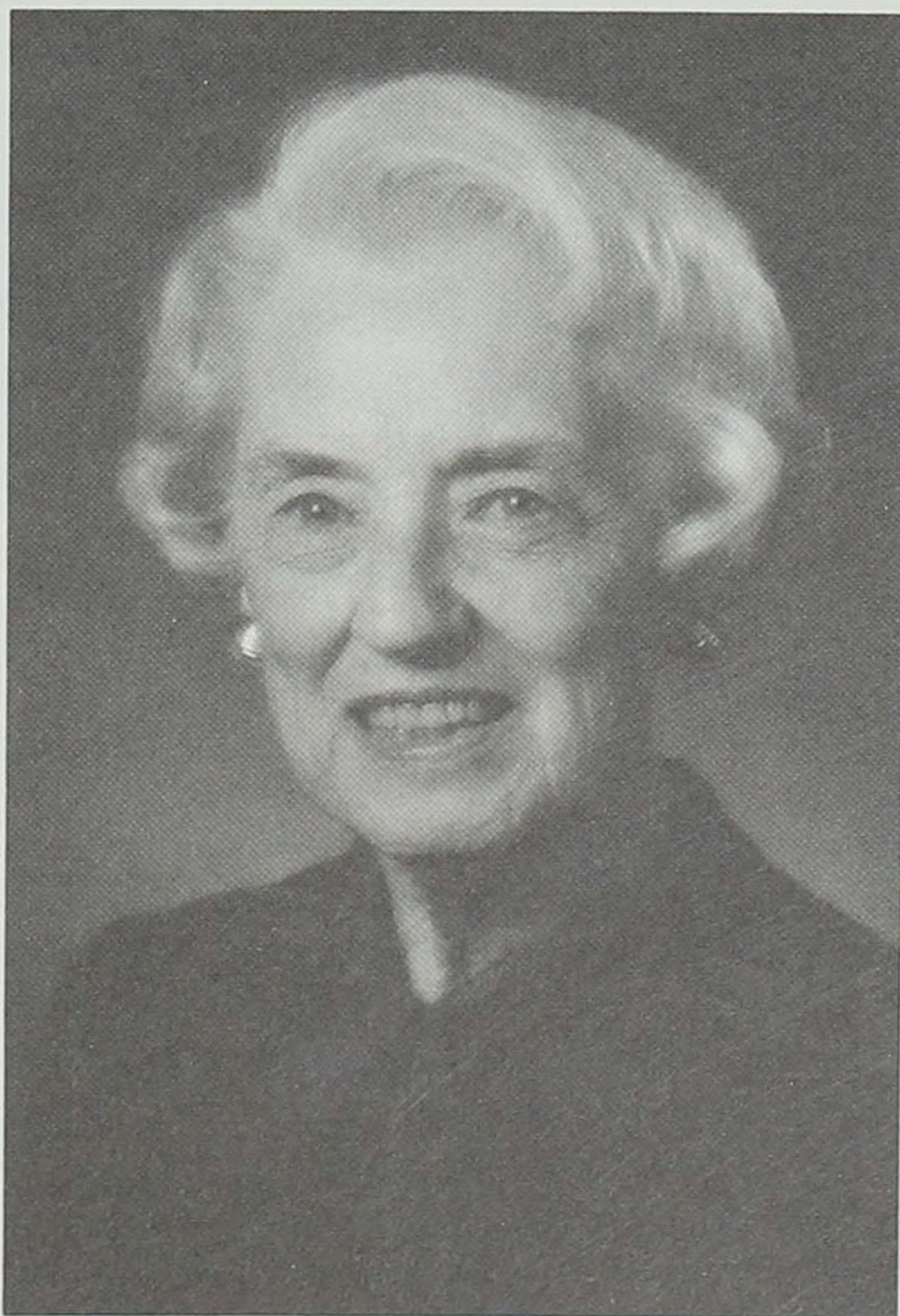
On March 1 President Roosevelt was scheduled to make his report on Yalta to a joint session of Congress. Tom told me that I should let nothing interfere with my being present because, he said, "This will be the last time you will see him alive." He said it with such finality I was appalled. I remember that after hearing Tom's words I sat quietly at my dressing table trying to understand what he had said.

Detailed arrangements were made for the president's appearance at the Capitol. It was no longer possible for him to make his traditional brave entrance, moving along on the specially constructed ramp with handrails, his powerful shoulders swinging his helpless legs.

This time he was carried in a chair and placed down in the well of the House chamber with a microphone on a table in front of him. His words came falteringly. Time and again I felt he would not be able to continue. Then I would look across the chamber to the president's gallery, which was directly opposite the family gallery where I was sitting. I could see Mrs. Roosevelt clearly as she followed the pages of his speech in her lap. In the dreadful lapses, when we all held our breath, she never seemed to look up from the pages to him. It was beyond my understanding.

On April 12, the news of the president's death came from Warm Springs, Georgia. From that moment until his burial at Hyde Park we heard only funereal music on the radio. How sad that he could not have lived a few months longer to see V-E Day in May or V-J Day in August 1945.

We now had a new president and a new first lady. What would it mean? As a senator, Harry Truman had been a genial, easygoing fellow. On a trip to Panama, when members of the Senate and House Military Committees had traveled together, Tom had found him a congenial traveling companion who took the press and the photographers much as they took him. He never seemed to push himself into the spotlight.



Dorris Brownlee Martin in 1980. (courtesy the author)

Bess Truman, however, at once showed her distaste for her official chores. She wanted only to be with her close circle of canasta-playing friends and to live quietly in a modest apartment in Washington or, preferably, back home in Independence, Missouri. Her friends from Missouri felt the same way about her. They once made front-page news when they traveled in a group to Washington, D.C. Neatly dressed, almost in uniform, and with their hair freshly "permed," they tasted the excitement of the White House. Any one of them could have stepped into Bess's shoes and the public might not have noticed the difference.

My next door neighbor was a secretary at the White House. She was aware how hard it was for Mrs. Truman to be continuously governed by protocol. During the early months of the administration, when she received guests she propelled them along at a speed which discouraged any small talk. I recall that Bess Truman had put in "Ozark Pudding" as her favorite recipe in the Congressional Cook Book; those political cookbooks tell much about people.

Secrecy in wartime was taken for granted. I never expected to know much about Tom's

committee trips, even when one of those trips kept us from our son's wedding. Later I learned what that particular committee was looking into: our scientists had conducted a test in New Mexico that had been completely successful. The atomic bomb had been exploded.

The long and costly experiment was considered a fortunate development which might bring the terrible war in the Pacific to an end. Thus President Truman ordered the dropping of such a device on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. On August 9, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Five days later the Japanese accepted the Allied terms and the war came to an end.

* * *

We were to have many more, and equally busy, years in Washington as Tom continued to serve as a member of the House of Representatives and, ultimately, as a United States Senator from Iowa. He would spend a total of twenty-two years in Washington representing the citizens of the state of Iowa. Those first years (1938-1945), however, were years of great changes and great challenges for Tom, for the Martin family, and for our nation. What was achieved in those years more than made up for the discomforts, the long hours, and the occasional uncertainties of life in the nation's capital. For I can admit that we grew to love our life in Washington even in its most turbulent moments. □

Note on Sources

This article was drawn from the first portion of Mrs. Martin's full-length manuscript, *Senate Wife*, which describes the twenty-two years Tom and Dorris Martin spent in Washington, D.C., representing the citizens of the state of Iowa.

"The Mighty I": The USS Iowa Story

by Stephen D. Regan

The USS Iowa bombarding North Korea in September 1952. (U.S. Navy photograph)

Every quarter of a century or so, the citizens of Iowa seem to be given the opportunity to reconsider the naval heritage of their most noncoastal state. The new opportunities are due largely to the fact that the state of Iowa is a battleship state *par excellence*. From the BB-4 which was the first battleship to carry the name of the Hawkeye State to the BB-53 and the BB-61, the Battleship *Iowa* has been a newsworthy and, indeed, noteworthy member of the U.S. Fleet. And thus one finds, in looking back through the volumes of the *Iowa Historical Record* and the *Palimpsest*, at least four articles that have dealt with the career of a Battleship *Iowa* or of the Battleships *Iowa*.

In 1898, A.N. Harbert did a pair of articles in

the *Iowa Historical Record*. In the first, which appeared in April 1898, he described the launching of the BB-4 which had taken place only two years before in March 1896, and then he described in some detail what he called "the greatest fighting vessel afloat." In October of that same year, Harbert, in a much longer article, wrote of the role of the *Iowa* in the battle of Santiago Bay on 3 July 1898. Quoting copiously from Captain Evans' account of the battle, Harbert drew a dashing and patriotic picture of the gallant officers and crew of the *Iowa* first taking enemy shells in the heat of the battle and then taking aboard enemy wounded

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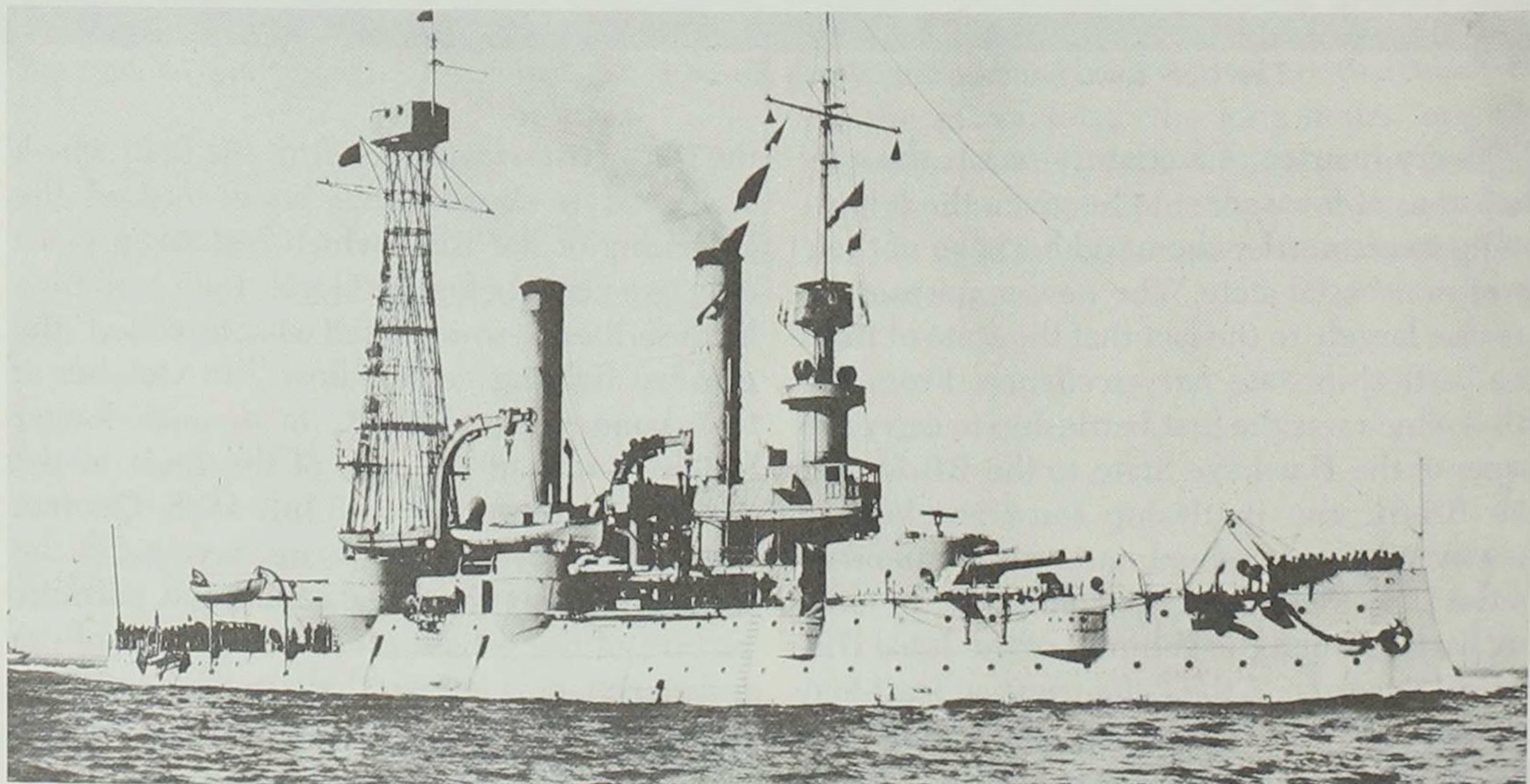
until "Blood was all over her usually white quarter deck and two hundred and seventy-two naked men were being supplied with water and food by those who a few minutes before had been using a rapid fire battery on them."

A quarter of a century later, Ruth Gallaher wrote a piece entitled "The *Iowa*" in the April 1923 issue of the *Palimpsest*. It was, in reality, an obituary for the gallant BB-4. In March 1923 the *Iowa* was no longer the *Iowa* or the BB-4 but rather the BS-4, and she had been sunk by the *Mississippi* in the Bay of Panama in a bit of target practice. Actually the years after the Spanish-American War had not been kind to the *Iowa*. She had not been part of the Great White Fleet on its famous circumnavigation of the globe in the first decade of the century, and by the time the United States entered World War I in 1917, the *Iowa* was suitable only for coastal defense. By 1920 the once grand ship had become a target ship, first for planes and later for her sister ships. Her end was perhaps inglorious but, as Miss Gallaher noted, one admiral seemed to sum it all up rather succinctly: "She was a good ship, and that was good shooting."

Twenty-nine years later, in March 1952, yet another article on the Battleships *Iowa* appeared in the *Palimpsest*, when William J. Petersen, shortly after returning from a shake-down cruise on the newly recommissioned BB-61 which had taken the *Palimpsest* editor and a group of eminent Iowans from the West Coast to the Hawaiian Islands, devoted an entire issue to an account of that cruise, the history of the BB-61, and some notes on other ships which had borne the name, *Iowa*.

Between the BB-4 and the BB-61 there was the short and incomplete career of the BB-53. Laid down on 17 May 1920, the BB-53 was about one-third completed when work on it came to a halt in August 1923. This second *Iowa* fell victim to the terms of the Washington Naval Treaty with its famous 5-5-3 capital ship ratio. Never completed, the BB-53 was sold for scrap a few months after work on it ceased.

But the 1930s brought the authorization of yet another *Iowa* and that was the ship which did such yeoman service in World War II, and then was recommissioned in 1951 for service in the Korean Conflict only to be put back into mothballs in 1958. It was felt by many naval



The first Battleship Iowa, the BB-4. (Mr. and Mrs. Russell Critz, SHSI)

strategists and historians that the decommissioning of the *Iowa* in 1958 marked an end to her career and to the battleship era. As recently as 1976, it was pointed out in a work on battleships that any further naval use of the *Iowa* and its sister ships in class was unlikely due to their age, deterioration, and general obsolescence. In the last two years, however, the situation has changed as the *Iowa* and other battleships of the *Iowa* class have again become newsworthy because of requests made by the president and the Department of the Navy to reactivate the old battleships. Thus *Iowa* remains, in 1983, a battleship state *par excellence* even in an age when many continue to question the use of such vessels in current or future military operations.

And it has now been a little over thirty years since the *Palimpsest* has shared with its readers a bit of the history of the Battleships *Iowa*. The ship, however, is not only again newsworthy, but she remains eminently worthy of historical consideration.

The USS *Iowa* was a pretty impressive capital ship. Three football fields could be laid on her deck, and most Iowa towns could not match the ship in population. If she had wheels she could be picked up for speeding, and her guns were powerful enough to toss a shell the weight of a Cadillac from Cedar Rapids to Iowa City.

Unfortunately, America's battleships were like a blocking back in a football game—they were always the playmakers but never the heroes. In naval warfare the swift but defenseless aircraft carriers were the primary vehicles for attack. As bigger and faster carriers were built, however, bigger and faster battleships were needed to support them. The biggest and most powerful of America's dreadnoughts was the *Iowa* (BB-61).

Specifically, the teakwood-decked behemoth was an 887-foot, 55,000-ton battlewagon carrying nine 16" guns, twenty 5" guns, and

twenty 40mm anti-aircraft guns. It took almost 3,000 men to sail her at speeds well over thirty-three knots. In the world of battleships, only Japan's *Yamato* and *Musashi* were bigger. The *Yamato*, for example, displaced over 72,000 tons, and she carried nine 18.1-inch guns.

The *Iowa*'s keel was laid down on 27 January 1940. It was appropriate that Mrs. Henry Wallace, wife of the Iowa-born vice-president, and an Iowan herself, sponsored the ship and christened her in August of 1942. Captain John McCrea, a former aide to Franklin D. Roosevelt when he was undersecretary of the Navy, was the first commanding officer of the *Iowa*. Shortly after the *Iowa* joined the active fleet, three other ships were built as *Iowa* class ships. They were the *New Jersey*, the *Missouri*, and the *Wisconsin*.

After her shakedown cruise, the *Iowa* was selected to carry President Roosevelt on the initial leg of his trip to Teheran where he was to meet with Stalin and Churchill. The president acknowledged that he was extremely proud to be aboard the United States' biggest warship, especially when it was under the command of an old friend.

The president boarded the *Iowa* in November 1943 with no fanfare because he wanted to be treated just like one of the hands. And so he was treated. When he entered his stateroom he found a note taped to the wall stating merely that the occupant would eat in the Flag Mess, abandon ship in Admiral Lee's motor whaleboat, and be permitted use of the first superstructure port and starboard for promenade. Thus did his former aide let it be known that Franklin D. Roosevelt was just another passenger.

To keep the crew alert, and no doubt to impress the president, several defense drills were performed, but during one of the routine drills the *Iowa* made a sudden swerve, listed heavily, and lurched to full speed which sent crew, materials, and president flying across

decks. A torpedo had become dislodged from an escorting destroyer and it would have struck the *Iowa* had not an alert watch called a torpedo sighting to the bridge where the appropriate course changes were made.

Fleet Admiral King, traveling as an advisor to the president, demanded an immediate court-martial and removal of the destroyer captain. The president, however, felt that experienced men were in short supply and thus he intervened personally on the captain's behalf. It was the second time the president had intervened in a matter concerning the *Iowa*. In July 1943 the *Iowa* had cut a hole in her hull in a grounding incident at Casco Bay, Maine. President Roosevelt, after a review of the incident, had ordered his former aide exonerated of all blame in the matter.

After playing host to the commander-in-chief, the *Iowa* became the flagship in Battleship Division 7 and spent the remainder of 1943 in the Atlantic on *Tirpitz* watch, which was designed to keep that feared German battleship penned up in Norway. On 2 January 1944 the *Iowa*, however, was ordered to the Pacific to support Rear Admiral F.C. Sherman's task group in an attack on the Marshall Islands.

Although they scraped their sides on the locks, the *Iowa* and her sister ship, the *New Jersey*, squeezed through the Panama Canal and reached the Pacific in time to assist in the bombardment of Majuro and Kwajalein prior to the landing of General H.M. ("Howlin' Mad") Smith's marines. In late February the *Iowa* was assigned to Task Force 58 under the remarkable Vice Admiral Raymond Spruance for an attack on Truk. At Truk she was responsible for a portion of the 265 enemy aircraft destroyed and was in on the sinking of the Cruiser *Katori* and the Destroyer *Maikaze*. The *Iowa* finally completed a rather heady first month in the Pacific with a strike at Saipan.

Rear Admiral Willis Lee, when ordered to form a task force of six battleships and a fast

carrier for an attack on Japanese shipping around Mili Atoll, took his flag aboard the *Iowa* and from there directed the sinking of several enemy ships with no American losses. It was in this action, however, that the *Iowa* suffered her worst damage of the war when she sustained two direct hits. But for all practical purposes, even two direct hits caused slight damage and only two members of the crew were injured.

During the next two months the ship was called on to support British landings at Aitape, Humboldt Bay, and New Guinea and to protect carriers operating in those regions. Although such actions produced no great war stories, the *Iowa*'s assistance was nevertheless important.

As early as June 1944 it was apparent that Japan, unable to protect or even supply her island-based troops, was in serious trouble. The Imperial Navy recognized that Task Force 58, which had grown substantially to include not only the *Iowa* but six other battleships, fifteen carriers, twenty-one cruisers, sixty-nine destroyers, and many other ships, was a primary cause of mounting Japanese losses. It was of paramount importance to the Japanese Navy to defeat Task Force 58.

Dividing their air strike force into four sections, the Japanese attacked the Task Force on 19 June 1944. The tenacious Americans, however, warded off each successive wave. When the engagement, often referred to as the "Great Mariannas Turkey Shoot," was over, the Japanese had lost 346 planes as against thirty planes lost by the U.S. Navy. It marked the end of any real hope for a Japanese naval victory since they were left with barely three carriers and 100 operable aircraft.

No doubt the results of the Battle of the Philippine Sea were received with elation on the decks of the *Iowa* but, on the admiral's bridge, Admirals Lee and Halsey voiced their frustration for they knew that Japan's battleships and most of its cruiser force had not

New Appearance for News for Members

This issue of News for Members inaugurates a new format for the Society's newsletter. Hereafter, News for Members will be published and bound inside the Palimpsest. Four issues of the newsletter will be produced each year, as before, and the content will remain very similar to that which has proved so successful over the years. We have revived some features and added new ones—a calendar of coming events and a descriptive series about Iowa organizations.

You will note that the new style has forced us to drop the volume and number designations from our masthead. We hope that this will not cause too many problems. We will run the current month and year at the bottom of each News for Members page instead.

While the change in newsletter format was prompted by budgetary considerations and mailing costs, we believe that it is an improved design which will allow the Society's publications program area a greater degree of flexibility and responsiveness in serving the membership of the State Historical Society and the people of Iowa.

William Cochran Assumes Administrative Position

Variety has been a constant in the career of William M. Cochran, the Administrator of the State Historical Society, both before and since joining the staff in December of 1981.

Appointed to be Administrative Assistant to then Acting Director of the Society Loren N. Horton, Bill was immediately involved in several major projects. He was responsible for the planning and promotion of many of the 125th Anniversary ceremonies, including those at Old Capitol in Iowa City in January and the Society's Annual Banquet in Des Moines in June 1982.

During the spring of 1982, the Society published his "The Public Library and Local History" as Number 15 in its series of *Technical Sheets*. Its appearance coincided with the beginning of a survey Bill is conducting of local history materials in all the public libraries in Iowa. The survey itself has been completed and the data gathered is now being analyzed by computer preparatory to publishing the results.

When the Iowa State Historical Department was reorganized as of July 1, his duties changed considerably. Among his new responsibilities are supervision of the administrative support staff, coordination of activities among the heads of the program areas of the Society, and facilitating communication between Iowa City and the Department offices in Des Moines.

Born in Nevada, Iowa, Bill grew up in New Hampton, in northeast Iowa. He attended Cornell College and the University of Iowa, receiving a Bachelor of Liberal Studies from the latter in 1979. Since then he has continued to pursue part-time graduate study toward a degree from the University of Iowa School of Library Science, which he hopes to complete next year.

Prior to his appointment with the Society, he worked for a year as librarian for Hansen Lind Meyer, one of the nation's leading architectural/engineering firms, and was responsible for the library and records management programs at their home offices in Iowa City and a branch office in Chicago. He also worked for a year in the purchasing department of Ar-Jay Building Products, a Cedar Rapids wholesale distributor.

His current schedule of work and study leave little time for recreation, but when time permits he enjoys reading in a variety of subject areas, playing chess, and following University of Iowa athletics.



Beginning with this issue of *News for Members*, a calendar of upcoming events which Society members might be interested in attending will be published. We hope to include a wide variety of meetings, as we recognize the broad range of interests among Society members.

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS, 1983

March 10-12	Missouri Valley History Conference, Omaha, Nebraska
March 29	South Central Chapter, Iowa Archaeological Society, Mount Ayr
April 6-9	Organization of American Historians, Cincinnati, Ohio
April 6-10	Society of Architectural Historians, Phoenix, Arizona
April 13-16	National Genealogical Society, Ft. Worth, Texas
April 16-17	Iowa Archaeological Society, Des Moines
April 17	National Library Week
April 22	Center for the Study of the Recent History of the United States, Iowa City
April 23	Iowa Local Historical and Museum Association (ILHMA), Des Moines
May 7	"Early Iowa Revisited" — bus tour to northeast Iowa*
May 21	Iowa Genealogical Society, Iowa City
June 4	Northwest regional ILHMA, Sergeant Bluff
June 4-9	Special Libraries Association, New Orleans
June 5-9	American Association of Museums, San Diego, California
June 11	Southeast regional ILHMA, Oskaloosa
June 18	Southwest regional ILHMA, Indianola
June 24-30	American Library Association, Los Angeles
June 25	Northeast regional ILHMA, Cedar Rapids
June 25	Annual Meeting and Banquet of the State Historical Society, Ames

*The University of Iowa Center for Conferences and Institutes is sponsoring this bus tour. It will include a tour of northeast Iowa geological, archaeological, and historical sites. Experts from each field will offer pre-tour lectures and on-site information and explanation. The tour will be conducted by Loren N. Horton, Historian at the State Historical Society. For more information, contact the university's Center for Conferences and Institutes liaison, Gertrude Schmidt, at (319) 353-5505.

New Award to be Presented

Roger B. Natte, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and Mary K. Fredericksen, editor of the *Palimpsest*, wish to announce at this time the establishment of a Trustees' Award. The award will be given annually to the individual who, in the opinion of the membership of the State Historical Society, wrote the best article published in the *Palimpsest* in the previous calendar year. The award will be presented at the annual banquet of the Society.

The members of the Board of Trustees and the editorial staff of the *Palimpsest* hope that the members will take the time necessary to record their choice for the 1982 award on a postcard and mail it to: Mary K. Fredericksen, Editor, The *Palimpsest*, State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

Slide Show Available

A slide show describing the various functions of the State Historical Society is now available for loan to interested groups. The 50 slides (for carousel slide projectors) are accompanied by a text for easy presentation. The slides highlight the many program areas of the Society, including the library, manuscripts, oral history, educational and community services, and publications. This overview of the Society is suitable for any group interested in the activities of the State Historical Society. There is no charge for borrowing the slide show, but borrowers are expected to pay return postage. If you are interested, please write to Alsatia Mellecker, State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

THE ANNUAL MEETING AND BANQUET OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY has been scheduled for June 25, 1983, at the Scheman Continuing Education Building on the campus of Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. Reservation information will be included in the next issue of *News for Members*.

Diaries a Valuable Historical Record

In our continuing effort to familiarize members with the research resources available at the Society, the following descriptive essay about the Society's diary collection, prepared by David Kinnett, Manuscripts Librarian, is especially important.

The manuscript collection contains personal diaries of about two hundred individuals, mostly nineteenth century Iowans. Some diaries recount experiences of only a few weeks such as the brief journal of Jacob Krehbiel (September 11-30, 1850) which is the record of an immigrant's departure from his home in Germany and part of his journey that led to settlement in Lee County, Iowa. Others, such as the diary of Joshua R. Williams, a student, teacher, salesman, and farmer, include 103 volumes and document in great detail the daily life of a middle class citizen in Iowa from 1896 to 1957. Diaries are among the most democratic types of writing. They require little formal education or wealth, only pencil and paper and an inclination to record one's observations and impressions. Diaries of such nineteenth century citizens as Governors Kirkwood, Carpenter, and Larrabee have been deposited with the Society but there are also diaries of small farmers and anonymous foot soldiers who served with Iowa regiments in the Civil War.

Diaries can be especially valuable because they record the lives of ordinary citizens, the obscure and forgotten who are frequently ignored by journalists or biographers and often treated by historians as statistics rather than individuals. The thirty year journal of Emily Hawley Gillespie, 1858-1888, is a meticulously detailed record of life and work on an average-size farm in Delaware County and how the author felt about her lot in life. Equally remarkable is the sixty-three year daily journal of domestic and social life in Iowa City that was kept by Adaline Kimball Jones between 1859 and 1922. Mrs. Jones was a careful chronicler of her own domestic labors and she also left a valuable record of social manners and customs in a small town and university community.

In diaries we can find eyewitness descriptions of local and national public events that were covered in the newspapers, but we can also find accounts of private fishing trips, family picnics and Sunday dinners in farmhouses. Some diarists took up the art in order to record travels. Around twenty diaries in the collection were written by emigrants and gold seekers who went to California between 1849 and 1865. One of the most complete is the travel journal of George Magoo, who left Muscatine in 1852 and spent almost two years in the California goldfields describing in his journal the trials and rewards of a miner's life. Other diaries record very little movement. The journals of Amos Currier and Edward Lucas were written largely in Southern prisoner of war camps during the Civil War.

Nearly every occupation of nineteenth century Iowa society is represented in the diary collection. There are, for example, twenty-four volumes of diaries of Ephraim Adams (1855-1882), one of the early Congregational ministers in the state and seventeen volumes of diaries of his wife Elisabeth. There are three volumes of diaries of the Civil War surgeon Charles Lothrop. There are diaries of university students and rural teachers, newspapermen and telegraph operators, seventy Civil War soldiers and half a dozen pioneer farmers and homesteaders in Kansas and Nebraska as well as Iowa.

Diaries usually document the trivial, the minutiae of history, the details that occupied the common and mundane lives of housewives and farmers, the boredom and tedium of the ordinary soldier in a Civil War camp or prison, the forgotten practices of domestic and farm labor in a different age, the lost arts of nineteenth century miners and craftsmen. Diaries give modern readers a glimpse into the lives of Iowans of a different time and allow those mostly forgotten people to explain in their own spontaneous and unguarded words what was important to them and how they spent their time. Besides teaching the reader about different centuries and conditions of life, diaries also introduce the reader to new people and because they are a most personal and candid type of writing it is possible he may learn something about human nature and his own nature.

Members Respond Generously to Appeal for Iowa Maps

A special thank you to everyone who responded so generously to my request for official Iowa road maps and county plat books and maps. Good descriptions accompanied the maps—mentioning place, date, publisher, and size—and made the maps very easy to identify.

We are still missing official state road maps for 1922-1936, 1943, 1944, 1947, 1951, 1957, and 1959, however. Also, land ownership maps and atlases from all time periods are always a very welcome addition to the collection. I hope that you will remember the Society's collection when you have a map or atlas which you no longer wish to keep or which you are interested in sharing with others by lending it to the Society for microfilming.—Nancy Kraft, Map Librarian.

March 1983

Historical Organizations in Iowa

The large number and variety of Iowa historical organizations has suggested the need for a News for Members series which describes individual organizations and provides information about how people might become members.

Iowa Local Historical and Museum Association

This organization was formed to provide an association of county and local historical societies and museums. It is independent of the Iowa State Historical Department but cooperates with it, and with other state, regional, or national organizations with similar objectives. The Association strives to develop an active interest in local, state, and national history. It promotes mutual assistance among historical societies and museums and provides the opportunity to meet together, discuss common problems, and share experiences. The Association offers consultative services, technically qualified or professionally trained personnel, and needed information for organizing and administering local and county historical societies and museums. Other services include advice for members about acquiring, preserving, maintaining, and operating museums, historic landmarks, and historic sites. The Association cooperates with other organizations in commemorating historic events, identifying and marking historic sites, preserving historic landmarks, and observing historic dates. For more information about the Iowa Local Historical and Museum Association, contact: Barbara Gearhart, Box 157, Hopkinton, Iowa 52237.

Iowa Genealogical Society

The purpose of this organization is to create and foster an interest in genealogy, especially as it pertains to the preservation of genealogical and historical data concerning the ancestors, founders, and early settlers of our country. It is also intended to aid individuals in their own genealogical research and in compiling their family histories. The Society has established a genealogical library and maintains it through contributions, donations, and exchanges. It publishes a quarterly periodical containing Iowa-related genealogical information and data, and seeks to be helpful to those working to improve their knowledge of genealogy and to those doing genealogical research. For more information about the Iowa Genealogical Society, contact: Roy C. Roba, 902 West 16th Street, Davenport, Iowa 52804.

Iowa Chapter, The Victorian Society in America

This organization was formed to develop public appreciation and understanding of nineteenth century artistic expression. The merits of Victorian architecture, design, literature, music, and decoration are explored. The Victorian Society works to protect important examples of the nineteenth century period. It offers advice about the techniques of preserving Victorian buildings and of adapting the buildings to modern uses. The Victorian Society encourages the maintenance and preservation of archives, books, records, and all materials relating to Victorian architecture, arts, and artifacts, and it works with other organizations having similar purposes. For more information about The Victorian Society in America, contact: Patrice K. Beam, 815 West 4th, Indianola, Iowa 50125.

Iowa Archaeological Society

The aim of this organization is to study and preserve Iowa's past. The Society seeks to gather, record, and publish archaeological information in cooperation with regional professional archaeologists. They publish a yearly *Journal* containing formal reports and a regular newsletter containing short articles of local interest and announcements of Society business. The Society holds an annual meeting, other occasional meetings, conducts field trips and field schools when excavations are in progress in the state, and maintains liaison with several affiliated regional chapters. For more information about the Iowa Archaeological Society, contact: Dan Zwiener, Rural Route 1, Sloan, Iowa 51055.

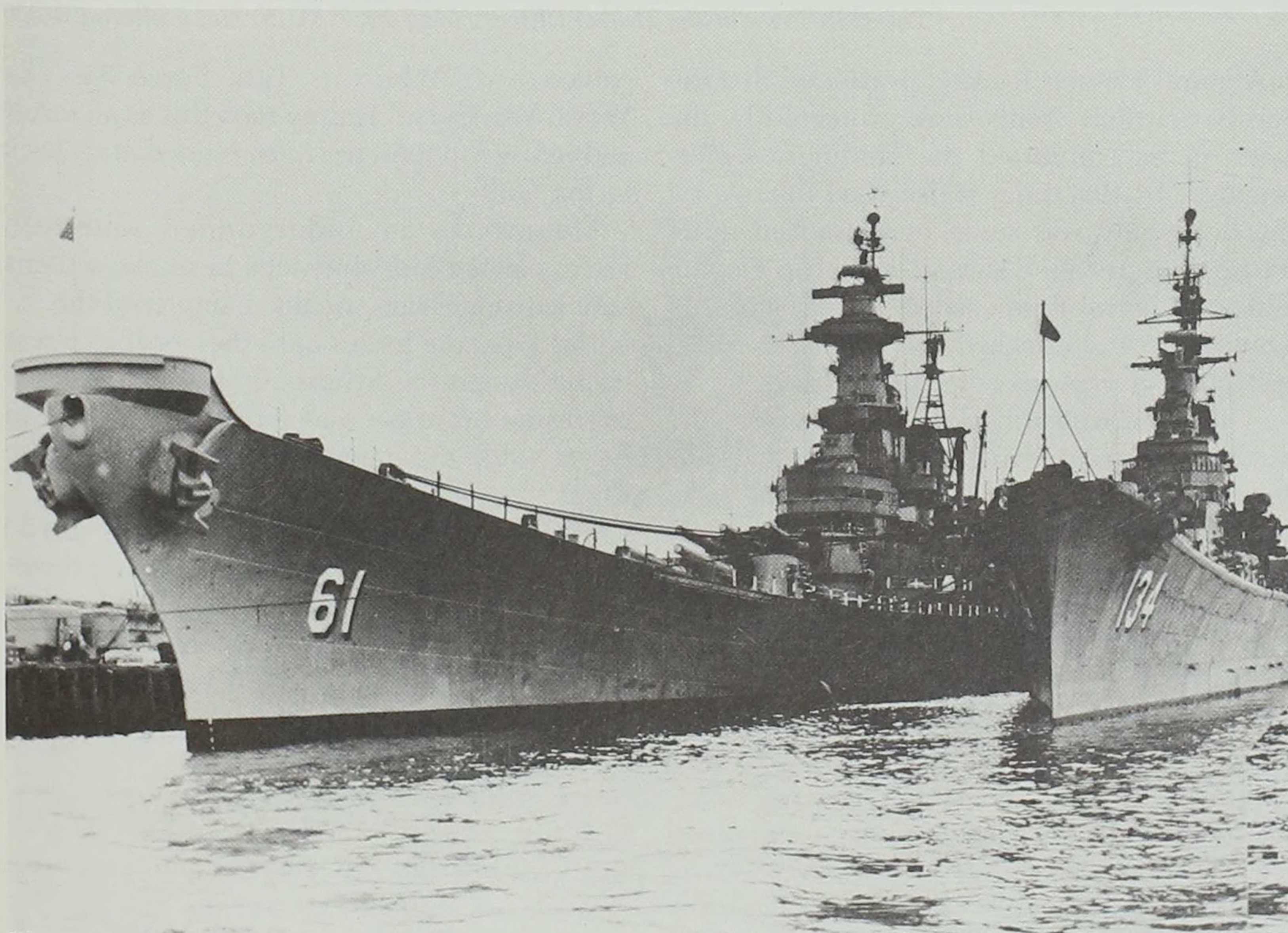
shared the fate of the carriers. Halsey, at times more reminiscent of an old gunfighter than of a modern naval officer, wanted a shoot-out between the *Iowa*, America's largest battleship, and the *Yamato*, Japan's biggest capital ship.

Halsey's shoot-out was thwarted, however, by a series of command changes that bounced the *Iowa* between Spruance's 5th Fleet and Halsey's 3rd, while Admiral Marc Mitscher, a pioneer aviator and a former carrier skipper, assumed command of the Task Force. In the midst of all the changes, the *Iowa*'s helm passed to Captain Allen Rockewell McCann.

In support of amphibious landings in the Philippines in October 1944, the Navy positioned one task force in southern Leyte Gulf and another, under Halsey and including both the *Iowa* and the *New Jersey*, at the San Ber-

nardino Straits. Both task forces were initially to assume a defensive posture.

The Japanese, in a textbook operation, divided their naval force into three fleets: the Northern, the Southern, and the Central Forces. The Northern Force was to sail north of Leyte Gulf and act as a decoy to lure the *Iowa* and the *New Jersey* away from their positions while the Southern and Central Forces, with the *Yamato*, were to attack the remainder of the U.S. fleet in a pincer movement. The Japanese, however, suffered from a version of Murphy's Law (anything that can go wrong, will go wrong), as the decoy Northern Force under Admiral Ozawa went unseen while the Central Force was spotted by a submarine on 24 October, and the Southern Force was mauled by Rear Admiral Jesse Oldendorf.



The Battleship *Iowa* berthed next to the Cruiser *Des Moines* at Norfolk, Virginia, in May 1956. (George Ver Steeg Collection, SHSI)



The USS Iowa in the Hudson River, May 1957. (U.S. Navy photograph)

Admiral Thomas Kinkaid presumed that the San Bernardino Straits were protected by the *Iowa* so he continued the landings. Unfortunately, by this time, Halsey had discovered the decoy and was some two hundred miles north of his assigned station when the *Yamato* and the Central Force sailed unmolested into Leyte Gulf and attacked the extremely small collection of destroyers and escorts.

A stunned Kinkaid asked Halsey where the fast battleships (referring to the *Iowa* and *New Jersey*) were. At 0830 he pleaded for the *Iowa* to return to Leyte but Halsey was busy attacking the meaningless decoy force. A desperate Kinkaid sent an uncoded message at 1000 asking "Where is Lee x Send Lee." Lee commanded Task Force 34 which included the *Iowa*, the *New Jersey*, and four other battleships.

A worried Admiral Chester Nimitz, monitoring signals back in Pearl Harbor, intervened when he sensed an impending defeat and asked Halsey, "Where is Task Force 34?" Unfortunately, with coding and padding of words to confuse the enemy, the message Halsey re-

ceived was "Where is Task Force 34. The World Wonders." Halsey took this as an insult and refused to send the *Iowa* immediately back to the Gulf.

Meanwhile an undergunned American force, playing hide-and-seek in smoke screens and occasional rain squalls, hammered the superior Japanese forces until they beat a retreat back through the Straits. By the time Halsey overcame his anger and returned the *Iowa* to Leyte Gulf the Japanese were clear of the Strait.

Probably the last great ship-to-ship battle had been fought at Leyte Gulf. The big showdown between the *Yamato* and the *Iowa* had not taken place largely because of Halsey's impatience, his failure to follow orders, and his almost neurotic desire for action of any kind. The *Iowa* had been built to counter the *Yamato* and to protect U.S. carriers. In what many historians consider the largest sea battle of all time, the *Iowa* should have fulfilled all of those purposes. She did not. The exact situation for which she had been built, for which her men had been trained, and for which she had been

ordered into position in Leyte Gulf had come to pass. But proper use was not made of the *Iowa* at Leyte Gulf.

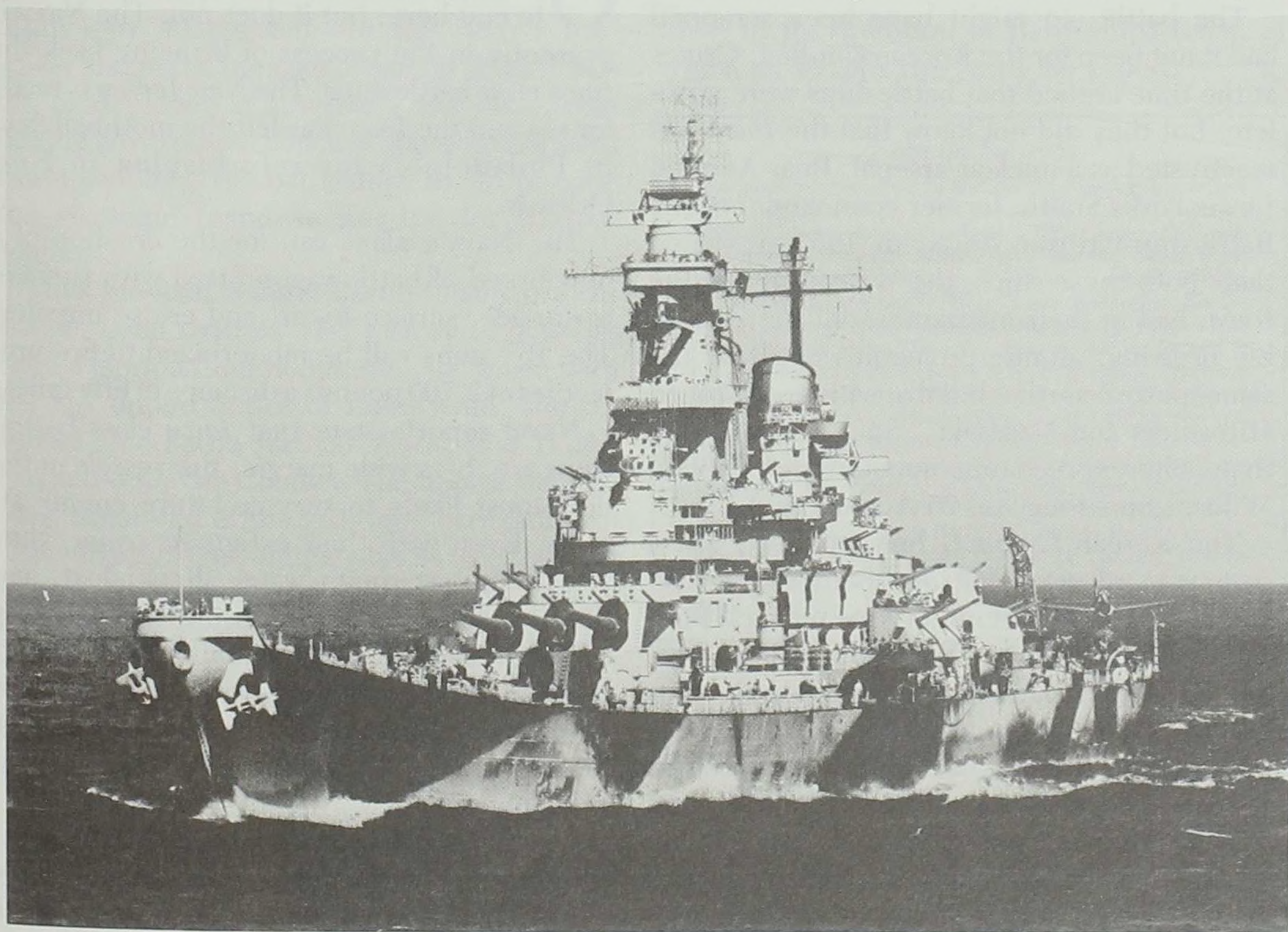
The significance of Halsey's action was clear. He failed to follow orders, he did not protect his charges, he made no rapid response to calls for assistance during the battle, and he allowed the Japanese battleships to escape. Had the battle ended in a defeat for the U.S. forces, Admiral Halsey might well have been responsible for a peace based upon something other than unconditional surrender. Only his popularity and his image in the press saved him from a court-martial. Almost all naval historians have criticized him for his part in the battle.

Halsey had deprived the *Iowa* of the chance to participate in a spectacular victory. Shortly thereafter, the battleship steamed home under a new skipper, J.L. Holloway. The *Iowa* re-

ceived a warm welcome in San Francisco and was overhauled at the shipyard at Hunter's Point. The *Iowa* then went to sea again in March 1945 for a shakedown and training cruise off San Pedro.

The battleship was soon back in action as Rear Admiral Oscar Badger's flagship for Battleship Division 7. She supported carrier actions off Okinawa before retiring to Ulithi for supplies in May. She then rejoined her old friends in Task Force 38, under Vice Admiral John McCain, for strikes against Kyushu, one of Japan's home islands.

During the summer of 1945 the *Iowa* blasted away at installations on Honshu and Hokkaido. With Captain Charles Wellborn, Jr., at her helm, she raided Nagoya and Tokyo just prior to the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The *Iowa's* twin sister, the



The Iowa entering Majuro Harbor in February 1944. (U.S. Navy photograph)

Missouri, was selected as the site for the surrender ceremonies, however, in deference to President Harry Truman. Ironically, Halsey requested that his flag be raised on the *Iowa* during those ceremonies.

With the coming of peace, the Navy evidently had difficulty figuring out what to do with the *Iowa*. She stayed in Japanese waters for barely a month. Then she returned to Long Beach via Seattle. By January 1946, however, she was back in Tokyo Bay as flagship of the 5th Fleet. The *Iowa* then returned home in April 1946 and for the next two years she served as a Naval Reserve training vessel, acting as a floating classroom for midshipmen from the Naval Academy and reserve personnel. The USS *Iowa* was finally decommissioned 24 March 1949.

The battleship might have been scrapped had it not been for the Korean Conflict. Critics at the time argued that battleships were obsolete, but they did not know that the *Iowa* was reactivated as a nuclear arsenal. Rear Admiral Lewis Parks Smith, former commander of the Battleship-Cruiser Force in 1953, revealed that "both these ships, the *Wisconsin* and the *Iowa*, had in their magazines, and were capable of firing, atomic projectiles of about the same power as the bombs which destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki." Such was the ship that Congress recommissioned under Captain William Smedbury on 25 August 1951.

The Korean Conflict, however, was not a serious naval war. The *Iowa* became the flagship for the 7th Fleet under Vice Admiral Robert Briscoe and, later, Vice Admiral J.J. "Jocko" Clark. The latter led a mock amphibious assault on Kojo in hopes of exposing the enemy, but he failed in his objective and thus helped convince the military establishment that the Korean Conflict was no war for a ship like the *Iowa*. Shortly after the Kojo operation, the battleship was ordered to Norfolk, Virginia, for overhaul.

For the next six years the *Iowa* moved from assignment to assignment and from ocean to ocean as the Navy tried to find a place for her. She served as flagship for NATO exercises in 1953 and 1957, and between those exercises, she joined a Battleship-Cruiser Force under Rear Admiral R.E. Libby. As a member of that force, the *Iowa* showed the colors in Scotland and in Mediterranean ports as well as in South America.

With her electrical system outdated and badly worn, the USS *Iowa* was ultimately berthed beside the *Wisconsin* in Philadelphia and decommissioned on February 24, 1958. The *Iowa*, the *Wisconsin*, and the *Missouri* were later to be cannibalized to rebuild the *New Jersey* which saw action off Vietnam.

One might expect the story of the USS *Iowa* to end here, but it does not. The Navy is presently in the process of bringing back the *Iowa* class battleships. The *New Jersey* is ready for sea and the *Iowa* has left the mothball fleet in Philadelphia for refurbishing in New Orleans.

The Navy's plans call for the creation of a new breed of battlewagon fitted with surface-to-surface, surface-to-air, and cruise missiles. The 16" guns will be modernized to fire projectiles of 2,700 pounds a distance of fifty miles.

Naval reports state that *Iowa* class battleships are, by a wide margin, the vessels in the fleet most likely to survive future enemy attacks. Even with their extensive armor, they are the fastest rough water ships afloat, and they have the longest cruising range of any conventional ship. Their size allows for comfortable quarters for their crews, ample space for new weapons systems, and a stable platform for Vertical Take Off/Landing (VTOL) planes and helicopters.

Reactivating the four *Iowa* class battleships adds new fuel to the ongoing debate in military circles about the superiority of air power over sea power. Yet the battleships will add signifi-



The Iowa steaming out of Wonson Harbor after a day's bombardment in April 1952. (U.S. Navy photograph)

cantly—by 40 percent—to the Navy's firepower and to the number of capital ships which can be deployed at any time. And given continuing government concern about future third world conflicts, the battleships might provide the strategic response needed for limited conflicts.

Thus the final chapter of the *Iowa* story has not yet been written. Her history to date has been a glorious and honorable one. Even with the lost opportunities of Leyte Gulf, she received nine battle stars in World War II and two in the Korean Conflict. The *Iowa* is the fifth most decorated of the sixty-one battleships in U.S. history. One might almost say that the *Iowa* was given an honorable name and it achieved an honorable record. May she con-

tinue in the tradition of Battleships *Iowa*, of which all Iowans can justly be proud. □

Note on Sources

The sources consulted in the preparation of this article included: Raymond V.B. Blackman, *Jane's Fighting Ships*, (London: Jane's Yearbooks, 1969); James McGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: Soldier of Freedom*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1970); Captain Donald Macintyre, *Leyte Gulf*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969); Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of U.S. Naval Operations in World War II*, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1960); Alan Pater, ed., *U.S. Battleships*, (Beverly Hills: Monitor Books, 1968); and *Records*, (U.S. Naval Historical Division, Washington, D.C., 1968). Several articles were also consulted: A.N. Harbert, "The Battleship *Iowa*," *Iowa Historical Record* 14 (April 1898); A.N. Harbert, "The *Iowa* as a Defender," *Iowa Historical Record* 14 (October 1898); Ruth A. Gallaher, "The *Iowa*," *The Palimpsest* 4 (April 1923); William J. Petersen, *The Palimpsest* 33 (March 1952); William H. Honan, "Return of the Battleship," *New York Times Magazine*, April 4 and April 11, 1982.

The Italian Heritage in Des Moines: Photographs

Notes by Maureen McCoy and William Silag





Labor Day in Days Motives, 1908: a parade pauses for the photographer. In the background are the Three Star Hotel and the Italian Importing Company, businesses founded by immigrants from northern Italy. (SHSI, courtesy Joseph Romano)

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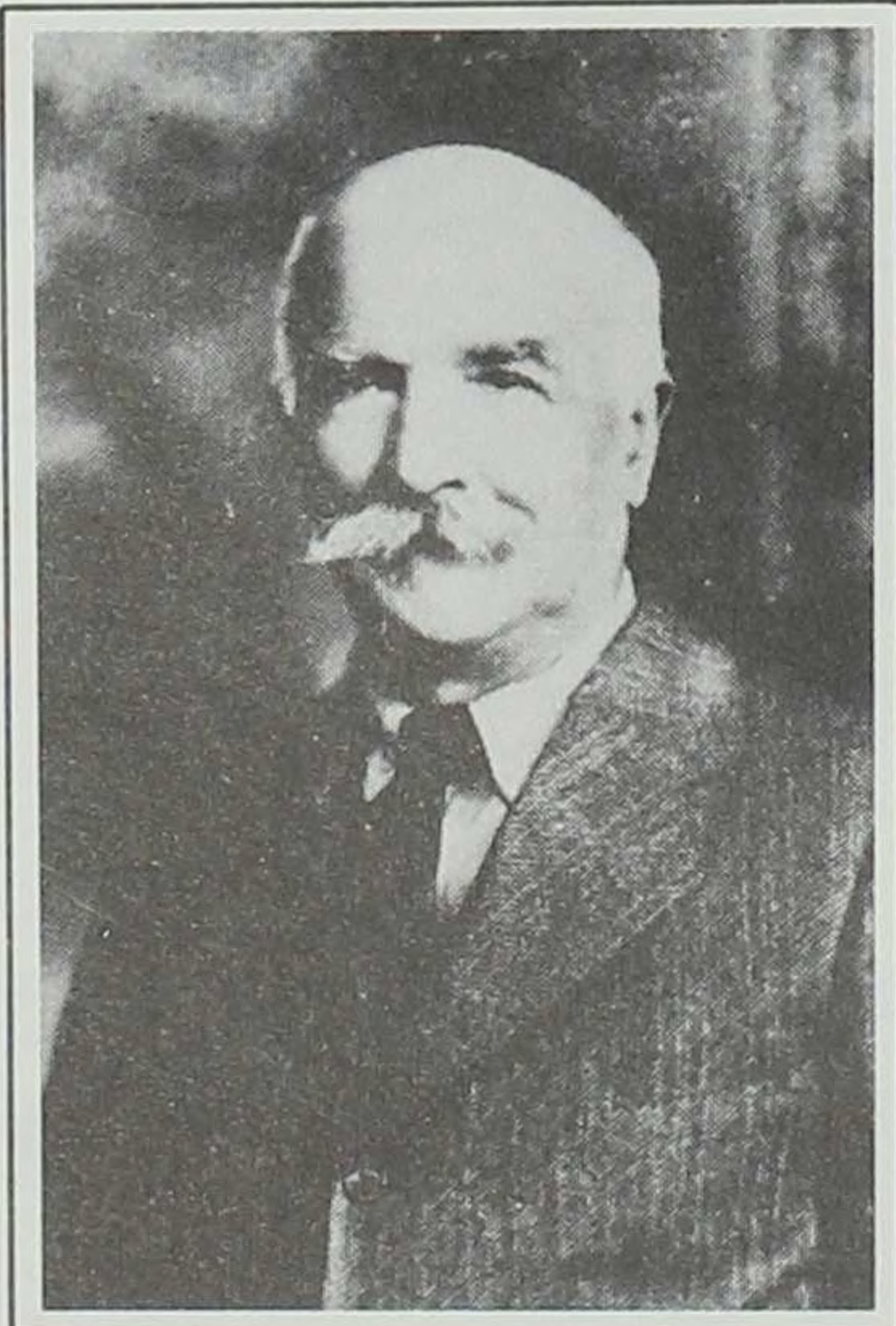
Italian Day in Des Moines, 1908, a parade pauses for the photographer. In the background are the Three Star Hotel and the Italian Importing Company, businesses founded by immigrants from northern Italy. (SHSL, courtesy Joseph Romano)

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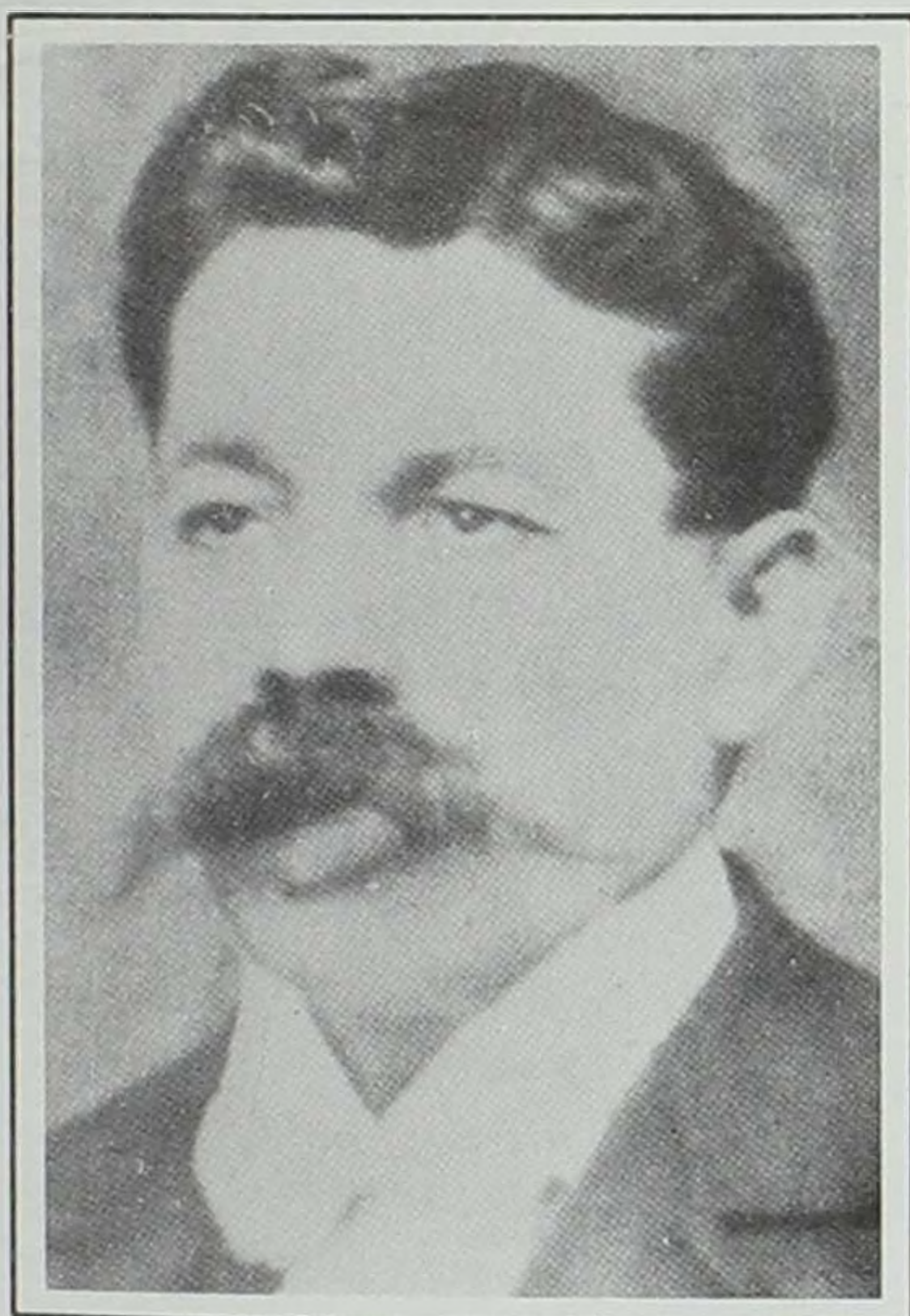
Pioneers of the Italian-American community of Des Moines: (standing, l. to r.) Antonio Napoletano, Constantino Giuliano, Luigi Jacopetti; (seated, l. to r.) Marco Chiesa, Joseph Chiesa, Frank DiBiaggio. Right, Crucoli, a village on the Ionian Sea in southern Italy, original home of such Des Moines families as the Scalises, the Gazzos, and the Sarcones. Other Des Moines families originated in Terravecchia and Cutro, also in southern Italy.

Luigi Jacopetti, one of the first Italian pioneers of the city of Des Moines.



For more than a half century, from the early 1880s through the 1930s, Italian immigrants traveled to Des Moines in search of new homes and new opportunities. Most left Italy to escape the chronic economic problems of their homeland, particularly in Italy's southern provinces where the majority of Des Moines-bound immigrants originated. Iowa's Italians experienced the same hardships and frustrations as other ethnic groups, but adapted rapidly to life in the United States. In Des Moines, the immigrants and their children enjoyed success in a variety of economic pursuits and earned positions of respect in city politics and in the local business community. They also retained a strong sense of their cultural heritage and preserved many of its values and traditions.

Published census figures do not provide precise counts of Italian-born Americans living in Des Moines at any given time, but the total number of Italian immigrants arriving in Des Moines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was at least several thousand. The identities of the first Italian immigrants to settle in the city are better known, however. The earliest arrivals moved quickly to take advantage of local economic opportunities. Luigi Jacopetti came to Des Moines in 1880 and soon opened a shop at Third and Walnut to sharpen scissors and knives; he also made umbrellas and sold barber supplies. A short time later, the Buonanni family built a candy kitchen adjacent to the streetcar waiting room at Sixth and Mulberry. By the 1890s several other businesses begun by Italian immigrants could be found in the neighborhood of the railroad depot: Marco Chiesa's tobacco store at Fourth and Depot, Egidio Romano's fruit stand at Fifth and Walnut, and the Three Star Hotel and Saloon, operated by Romano and Peter D'Appolonia, on Fourth Street near the railroad depot.



Samuel Coppola, first president of *Stemma D'Italia*, founded in 1898.

The photographs on this page and the opposite page appeared in the *American Citizen* newspaper.

A charter for the *Societa Stemma d'Italia*, listing the organization's officers at the time of its founding, in 1898, and its officers in 1932.



Most of the pioneer Italian-American businessmen of the 1880s and 1890s hailed from the provinces of northern Italy—Genoa, Tuscany, Venetia, Lombardy, and the Piedmont—and had come to Des Moines only after examining opportunities in other American cities. Apparently the presence of fellow northern Italians in the coal mining communities of northern Polk County and in the counties southeast of Des Moines attracted these men to central Iowa, where they hoped to establish various retail businesses to serve their coal mining countrymen. This they did with great success, though it would be a mistake to see their commercial efforts as aimed toward the creation of an insular Italian ethnic community. Located in the central business district of Iowa's largest city, the firms started by the Chiesas, Egidio Romano, and the other enterprising immigrants who would join them participated fully in the economic life of Des Moines. These early immigrant business firms also made vital contributions to the development of the Italian-American community that emerged in the city in the early years of the twentieth century.

Of particular importance was the establishment of the Italian Importing Company, a wholesale and retail firm specializing in traditional Italian foods for the growing immigrant market. Founded in 1900 by Egidio Romano, Marco Chiesa, and several other businessmen, the Italian Importing Company operated its own truck gardens on the outskirts of Des Moines and gradually built up a trade that stretched across the entire state. The company's delivery wagons traveled regular routes to other Iowa communities, including the nearby coal mining towns in Polk County but also reaching more than one hundred miles northeast to Oelwein, where several hundred Italian immigrants worked in railroad yards, and as far west as Council Bluffs. Joseph Romano, son of one of the company's founders, remembers making deliveries as far south as northern Missouri. The Italian Importing Company offered other important services to immigrants living in Des Moines. These included real estate and job information, assistance with money exchange, and travel arrangements between Des Moines and Italy. Many Italian men who worked in Des Moines had traveled alone to America, hoping to save enough to pay for the eventual passage of their families to the United States. Such family separations could last for months or years; individual experiences varied widely. Whatever the time of separation, until the family could be reunited, many young men sent money back to Italy periodically to insure the well-being of their families. In this, and in the purchase of tickets and the

filing of sponsorship papers, the Italian Importing Company acted as a source of assistance and information throughout the early period of Italian settlement in Des Moines.

Increasingly after 1900 the immigrants served by such business firms tended to be men and women recently arrived in the United States from southern Italy. Though important cultural differences existed between northern and southern Italians—most of them related to the divergent economic histories of the agrarian southern provinces and the urban, industrial provinces of the north—in Des Moines regional differences proved largely insignificant. All evidence suggests that immigrants from southern Italy enjoyed economic success on a par with that of the earlier arrivals from northern Italy and that relationships between members of the two groups have been cordial and conducive to the development of a strengthened Italian-American identity.

Where coal mining had offered employment to the majority of northern Italian immigrants, railroads proved more important as a source of jobs for men from southern Italy. This is not surprising, for many had worked on railroads in Italy before they emigrated and there is circumstantial evidence that a massive strike that crippled Italy's railroad system in the late 1890s may have prompted many transportation workers to leave the southern provinces at the turn of the century. In any event, the immigrants from southern Italy had definite ideas

Below, Egidio Romano's first Des Moines business firm: the fruit stand at Fifth and Walnut. Right, Joseph Muto's produce counter at the City Market in the early 1900s. Both Romano and Muto successfully expanded their businesses, serving customers in the Italian-American community and in the general Des Moines market as well. Bottom right, looking north on Sixth Street in downtown Des Moines, at the future site of the City Market.

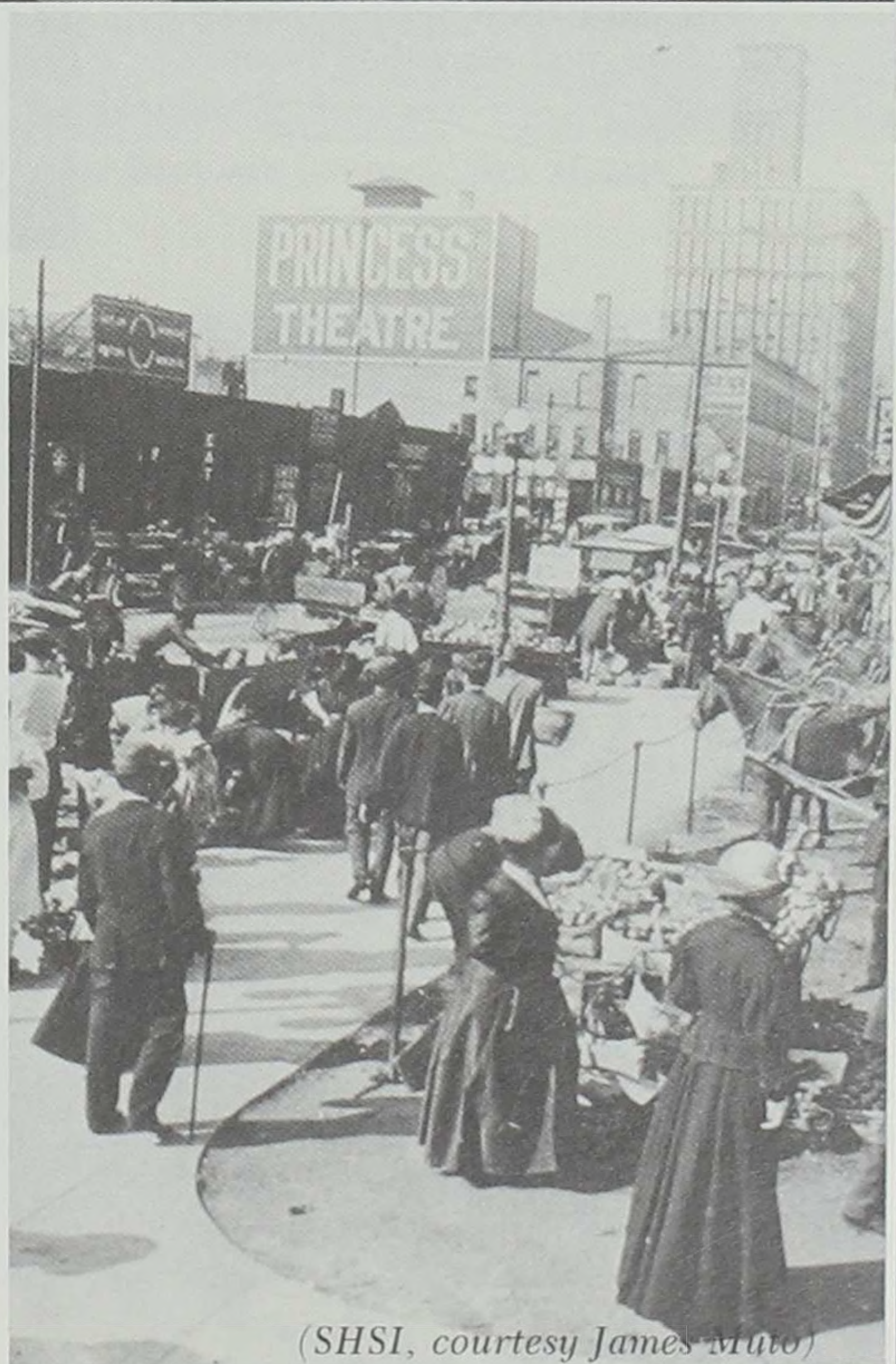
(SHSI, courtesy James Muto)





(SHSI, courtesy James Muto)

about their ultimate destination even before they left their homeland. Unlike the northern Italian immigrants of the 1880s and 1890s, the men from the South—often with the help of the Italian Importing Company or another firm functioning as travel agent—arranged for direct passage from Italy to Des Moines; they did not stop in other American cities along the way. Some immigrants received assistance from *padrones*, Italian-born organizers of labor crews who contracted with American employers to provide workers for construction projects. The padrone system was quite important during the 1890s and 1900s, and several present-day residents of Des Moines mentioned having relatives whose passage to the United States was arranged in this way. The padrone's contract with employers usually specified the length of service—often the period of a construction project—after which immigrant workers looked for job opportunities on their own. With or without initial association with padrones, Italian-born men in Des Moines after 1900 found work in the city's brick and tile yards, its railroad shops and woolen mills, or its retail businesses. Frequently individual immigrants parlayed modest amounts of capital into thriving tailoring or shoe repair businesses, barber shops, or grocery stores. Joseph Muto, for example, began with a produce counter in the City Market in the years before World War I. Later, however, he operated a succession of successful retail grocery businesses on Des Moines' south side.



(SHSI, courtesy James Muto)



(SHSI, courtesy St. Anthony's Church, Des Moines)

St. Anthony's Church and Rectory and, in the foreground, the Southside Community Center formed the core of the Italian-American neighborhood that developed on the south side after 1900. The original church was built in 1906 and was replaced by the present structure in the 1930s. The Community Center building, brought to the site from Ft. Des Moines after the First World War, provided classroom space, lounges, showers, and recreation rooms.

Two south side groceries: the Graziano Brothers store on South Union continues to thrive in 1983. Farther along South Union, the DeSio Grocery prospered for many years but closed in 1975. Benny DeSio, pictured here with his father in the 1920s, is now retired.



(SHSI, courtesy Rosa and Benny DeSio)



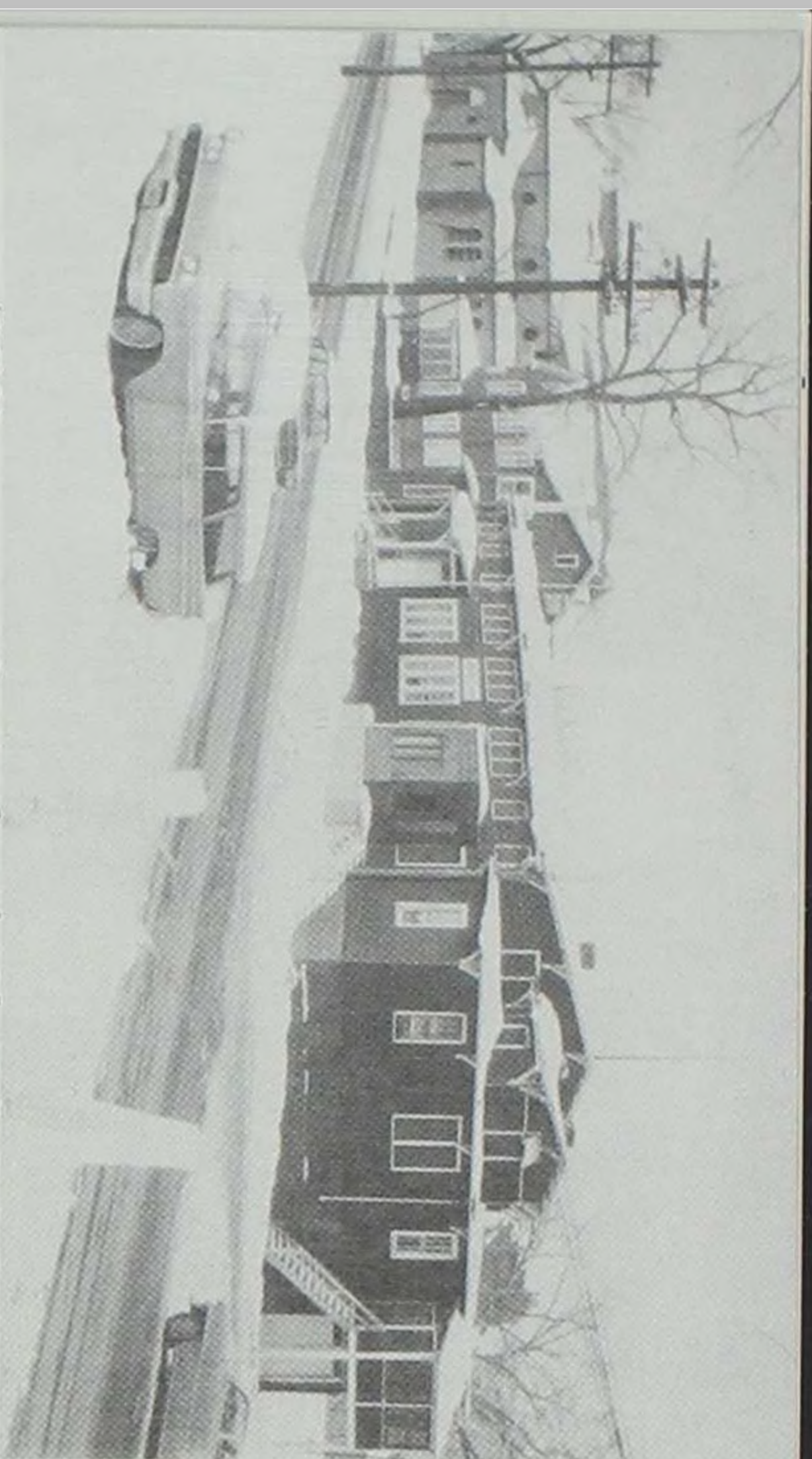


(SHSI, courtesy Graziano Brothers Grocery, Des Moines)

(SHSI, courtesy James Muto)

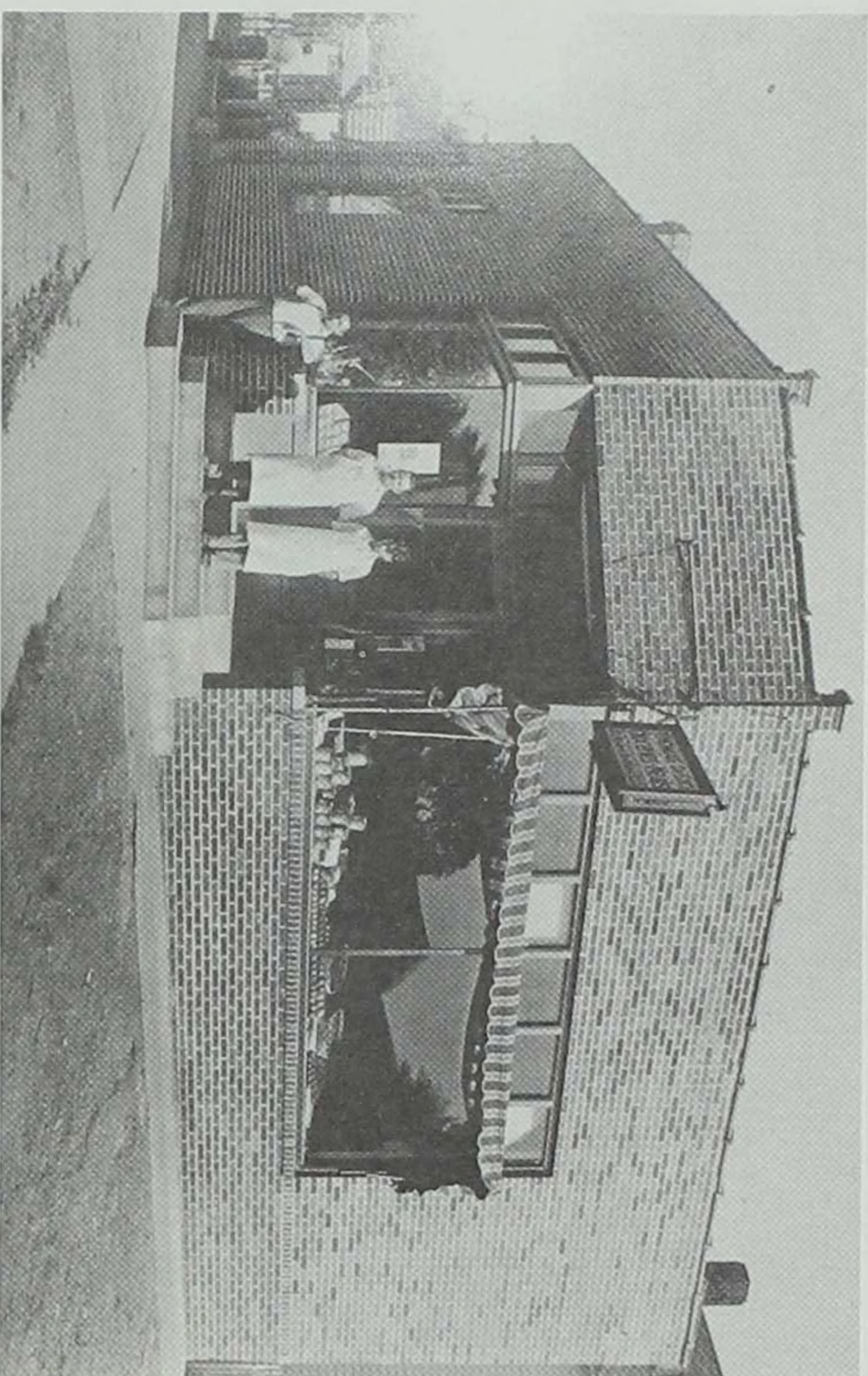


A 1936 meeting of the Societa Stemma d'Italia. This organization was formed in 1898 as an immigrant aid and fraternal society, and it has provided important leadership for the Italian-American community since that time.



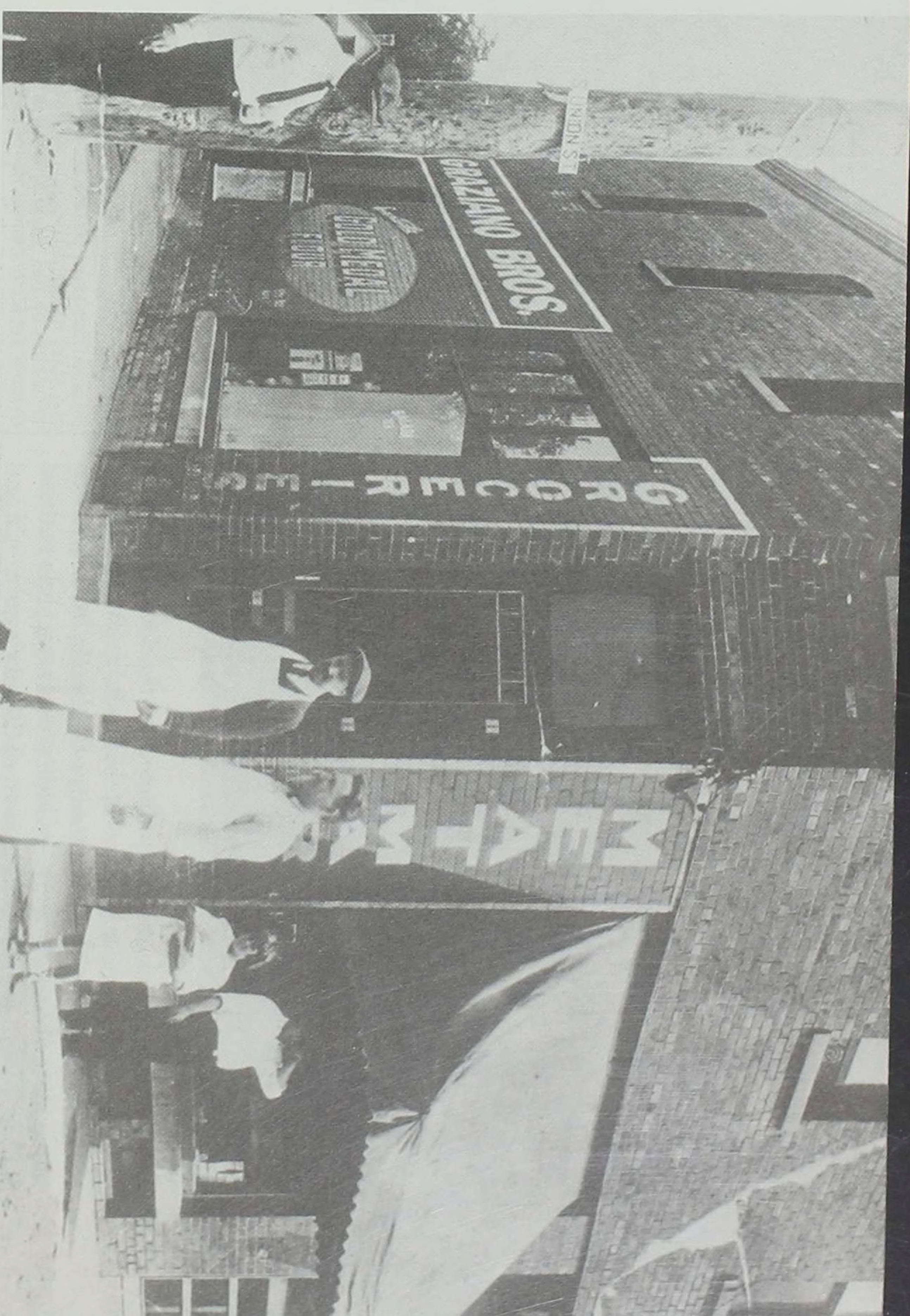
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(SHSL, courtesy John Chiesa)

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The growth of the Italian-American community on Des Moines' south side has been sustained by the activities of three key cultural institutions: the church, the benevolent societies, and the *American Citizen* newspaper. St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church, completed in 1906 at the corner of Ninth and Indianola, now includes 1,500 families and has remained a center of community social activity. In 1912 classrooms were added and in 1920 the Southside Community Center opened next door to the church and school. The benevolent societies — Stemma D'Italia, the Garibaldi Club, and Vittoria Lodge — have represented the interests of their members and have provided leadership to the Italian-American community as a whole. This is true also of the *American Citizen*, which began publication in 1919 as *Il Risveglio* ("reawakening") and continued until 1972. Founded by Anthony Sarcone, Frank Bianco, and Ray Simonini as a community newspaper, the *American Citizen* gave voice to the aspirations of Des Moines' Italian immigrants and their children. Institutions such as these served a dual purpose: they helped Italian-Americans retain a sense of their cultural heritage while encouraging members of the community to take full advantage of the economic, political, and educational opportunities offered in the city of Des Moines.

The photographs presented here offer a glimpse of some of the pioneers of the Italian-American community that have contributed much to the cultural vitality of Des Moines over the past one hundred years.

Family grocery businesses conducted by the Desios and the Grazianos have similar histories of successful growth in service to the Italian-American community. By the 1920s, the Italian immigrants of Des Moines—including northern and southern Italians—were represented in most of the city's industrial and commercial trades and could be found in the ranks of the professions as well. Of special importance in the early years was the presence of three young Italian immigrants—Nicola Bellizzi, George Scarpino, and Natalie Morasco—on the Des Moines police force, symbolizing the city's acceptance of its newest immigrant group.

The early 1900s saw the beginning of a residential shift for Italian immigrant families in Des Moines, out of the congested area near the railroad depot and across the Raccoon River to a pleasant, hilly neighborhood on the city's south side. The move was prompted primarily by a desire for residential quarters better than the crowded second- and third-floor apartments in which most families had been living, together with a level of prosperity that permitted families to consider larger homes for themselves. The Joseph Chiesa family moved into a new house on the south side as early as 1901; Peter D'Appolonia's family built a house next door at about the same time. In 1906 Joseph Muto moved his produce business from the City Market to the south side, where it developed into a complete retail grocery. Later other grocers, including Thomas Desio and the Graziano brothers, also opened stores on the south side of the city. These family businesses, and the shops and restaurants that followed, gave the neighborhood an important com-

PHOTOGRAPHS APPEARING IN THIS ARTICLE WERE COPIED FROM ORIGINALS LOANED TO THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA BY RESIDENTS OF DES MOINES WHO PARTICIPATED IN A PUBLIC PROGRAM, FUNDED BY THE IOWA HUMANITIES BOARD AND SPONSORED BY THE SOCIETY, IN WHICH IOWANS WERE ASKED TO EXPLORE THEIR ETHNIC HERITAGE AND TO SHARE IDEAS ABOUT THE INFLUENCE OF THAT HERITAGE ON THEMSELVES AND ON THEIR COMMUNITY. PROJECT DIRECTOR LOREN N. HORTON AND THE AUTHORS WISH TO THANK MANY INDIVIDUALS AND INSTITUTIONS IN DES MOINES AND IN IOWA CITY FOR THEIR ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING MAYOR PETE CRIVARO, JAMES MUTO, PATRICIA CIVITATE, BABE RISIGNANO, DOMINIC RIZZUTTI, MRS. ROSA DESIO AND BENNY DESIO, PROFESSOR JOSEPH LACAVA, JOSEPH ROMANO, JANE NORMAN, ELAINE ESTES, FATHER GEORGE NODANIEL, JAMES SARCONE, LEO SARCONE, AND GASPARE SARCONE, MANDO TONINI, CHARLES LAVORATO, JOHN CHIESA, DOMINIC BONANNO, MRS. RAY SIMONINI, DONATO CIANCARUSO, JOHN AND MARY SITRONETO, AND FATHER GERALD RYAN. BELLIZZI-MACRAE AMERICAN LEGION POST, ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH, GRAZIANO BROTHERS GROCERY, WHO-TV, AND THE DES MOINES TRIBUNE GENEROUSLY PROVIDED SPACE AND OTHER FACILITIES. THE AUTHORS ALSO WISH TO THANK PHOTOGRAPHERS STEVEN J. FULLER AND GERALD MANSHEIM, PROFESSOR LINDA KERBER, AND THOMAS HARTIG, MAILE SAGEN, AND CEDRA WILLIAMSON OF THE IOWA HUMANITIES BOARD STAFF FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE.

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(SHSI, courtesy Leo Sarcone)



The founders of the American Citizen newspaper: (l. to r.) Ray Simonini, Anthony Sarcone, Frank Bianco. The weekly newspaper served as the information source for Italian Des Moines news from 1919 until 1972, when publication ceased. The paper sought to help immigrants adjust to American customs and laws and to provide a communications link within the Des Moines Italian-American community.

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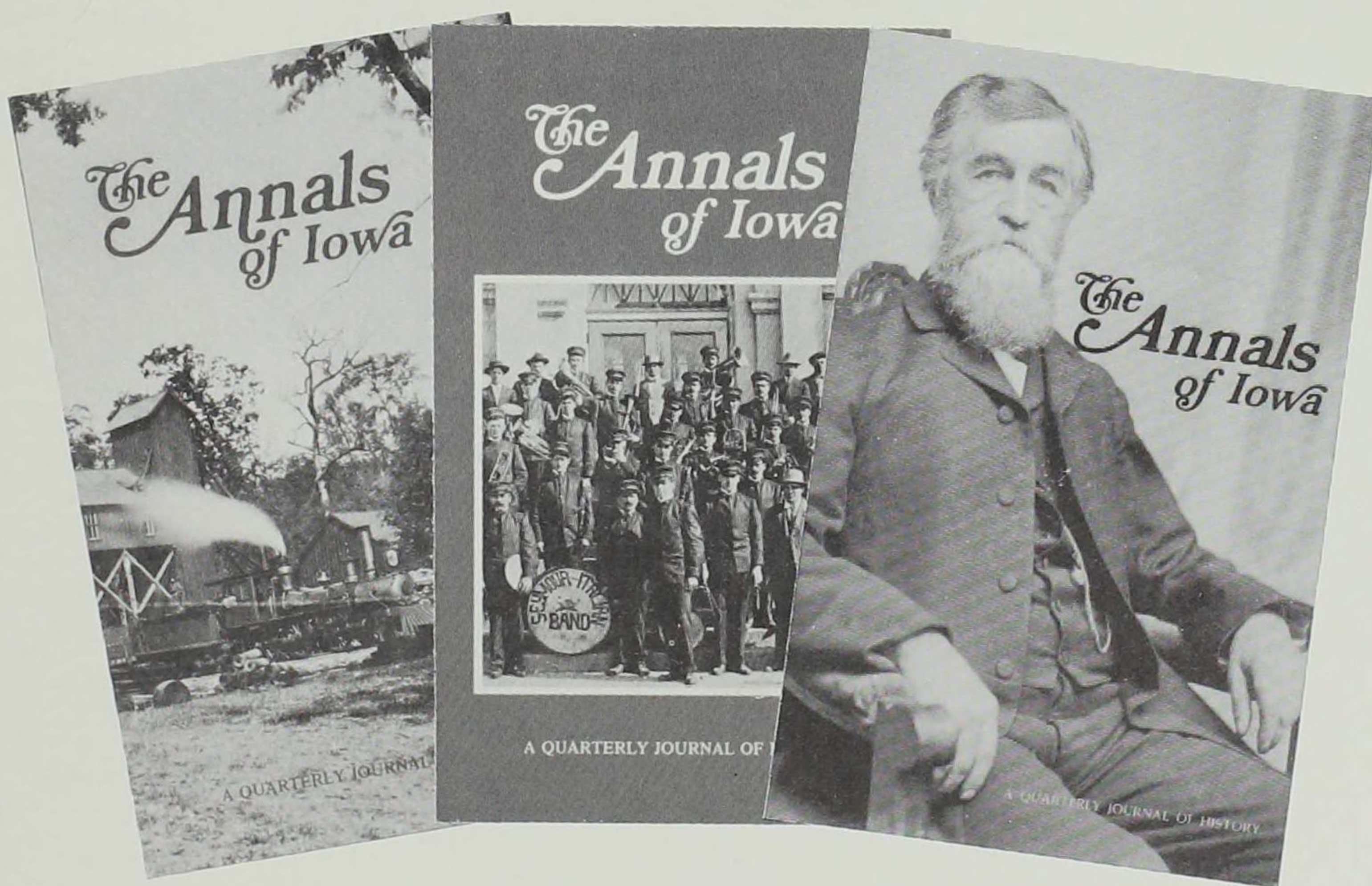
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If you missed the *Annals of Iowa's* spring issue, you missed:

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—“Battled Conflict: Keokuk and Prohibition, 1880-1884,” by Jerry Harrington, and

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